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THE HOUSE OF HISTORY
FOURTH STOREY



Lottery Wheel, 1808.

(Drawn on a sledge and escorted by a detachment of Life Guards.)

"Lotteries for many years were drawn in Guildhall, but of late they have been removed to Cooper's Hall. . . . It has always been the custom for the scholars of Christ's Hospital to draw the tickets."

(W. H. PYNE : *The Costume of Britain*, 1808.)

THE HOUSE OF HISTORY

THE FOURTH STOREY
MODERN SOCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL HISTORY

DOROTHY GORDON M.A. (OXON.)

THOMAS NELSON AND SONS LTD
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THE HOUSE OF HISTORY



THE BASEMENT
FROM THE EARLIEST MEN TO THE FALL OF ROME

FIRST STOREY
THE MIDDLE AGES—EARLY DAYS TO 1485

SECOND STOREY
EARLY MODERN HISTORY—FROM 1485 TO 1714

THIRD STOREY
LATER MODERN HISTORY

FOURTH STOREY
MODERN SOCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL HISTORY

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PART I.—EIGHTEENTH CENTURY
BRITAIN

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THE HOUSE OF HISTORY

THE FOURTH STOREY

CHAPTER I.—WHAT BRITAIN LOOKED LIKE

Town and country—Roads and transport

" He lived in that past Georgian day,
When men were less inclined to say
That ' Time is Gold,' and overlay
With toil their pleasure ;
He held some land and dwelt thereon—
Where, I forget,—the house is gone ;
His Christian name, I think, was John—
His surname, Leisure."

AUSTIN DOBSON.

THE story of Britain's growth from a small nation of farmers, merchants, and craftsmen to a great industrial nation begins in the eighteenth century, which was one of the most important in our history. It was full of excitement and change. Britain was engaged in great wars, and at the end of the century she had to fight for her life against her most dangerous enemy—Napoleon. She laid the foundations of her vast Empire by winning Canada and India, and she forfeited the chance of a yet greater one by losing the North American colonies, which became the United States.

In 1707 the Scottish Parliament was united with that of England, and at the end of the century * the separate Parliament in Dublin also came to an end. Finally, about the middle of the century began those social movements which, during the next hundred years, completely changed the face of England. We shall trace the steps by which this great change came about, but first let us see what England looked like in the middle of the eighteenth century.

If you could have chartered an aeroplane in 1750, and been able to look down on England from above, you would have seen a very different landscape from that of to-day. To us a large part of England seems like a vast collection of towns and their suburbs. On the railways the stations come close together in some districts, with not very much open country in between, and this is especially noticeable as we travel farther north. North-eastern England and the Midlands are to-day crowded with industrial towns, thick with factory chimneys and black with smoke. A large part of the Midland area we call the Black Country, and it is a good description, because the towns and the country-side, and even the very air, seem blackened. The north-eastern part of England is very busy and very thickly populated—much more so than the south, which, with the exception of London, is, on the whole, greener and more peaceful.

But the observer of 1750 would not have paid much attention to the North and Midlands, which were then, for the most part, wild and desolate country, with few villages and inhabitants. There were a few good-sized towns engaged in the Yorkshire woollen industry

* The Irish Act of Union came into force in 1801.

while Manchester and Liverpool were important, but otherwise the country was one of moorland and forest, where the country folk found it hard to win a living out of the soil. It was the south and east of England where by far the greater part of the population lived and flourished, and where the national industries of agriculture and cloth-weaving respectively were carried on.

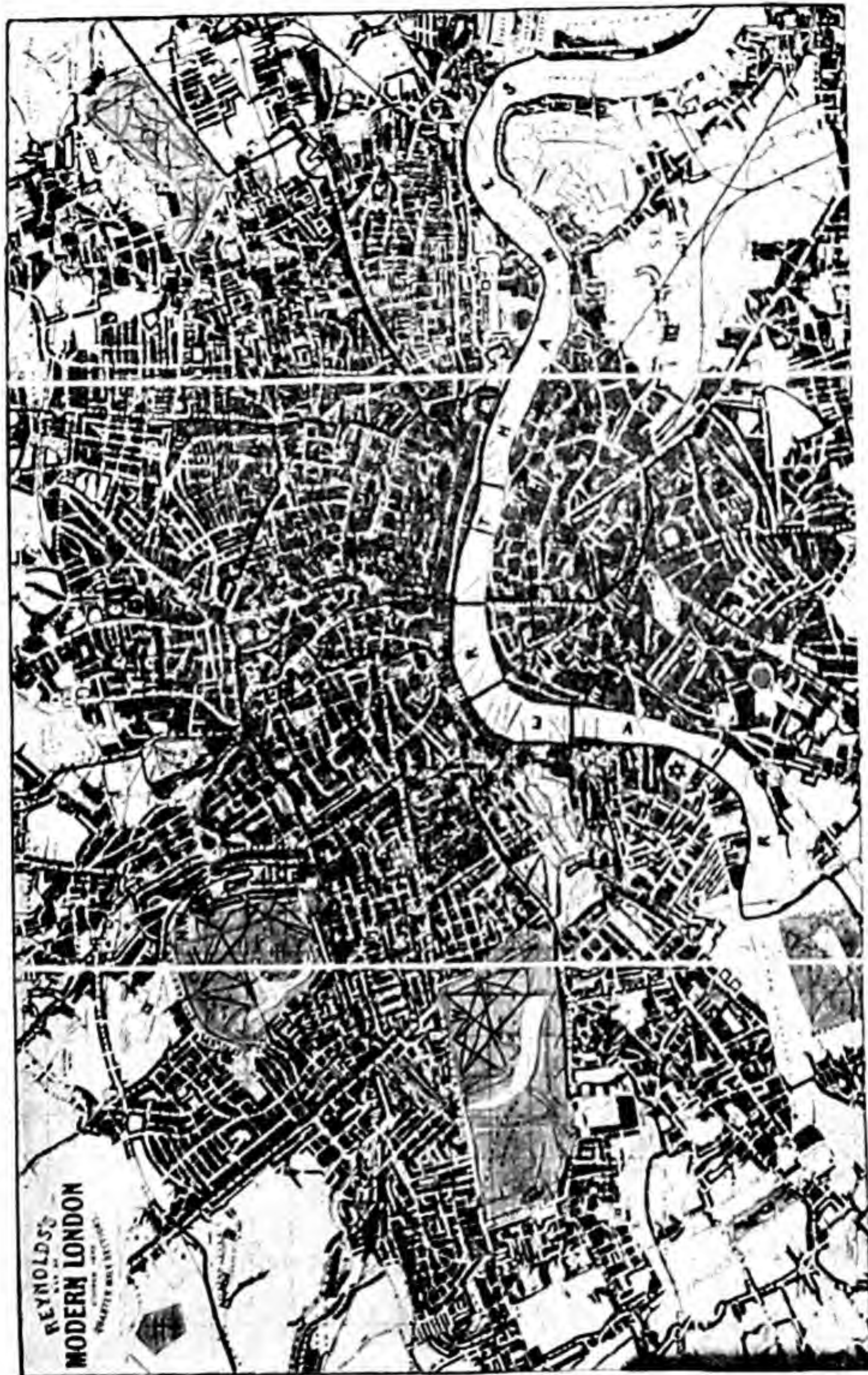
Our aeroplane would have circled over several busy cities, including Bristol, Norwich, Southampton, Bath, and Oxford. Some were seaports; some—like Norwich, Colchester, and Nottingham—were centres of a special industry; others were fashionable resorts, cathedral cities, or seats of learning. None of them were factory towns.

Greatest of all was London, and to London all roads ran. London lay along the north side of the Thames—there were not many buildings on the south side. Places like Hammersmith and Paddington were in the fresh open country, but in the city and the parts where the poor lived conditions were terrible. There was no sanitation, often no water except ditch water, and the people lived huddled together in dark, insanitary and tumbledown dwellings. Although many fine streets and houses had been built for the prosperous citizens, there was not even house-room for many of the 600,000 inhabitants of the capital.

Besides the large towns, there were a great many little market towns to which the villagers brought their produce to sell in the old market-place, and where there were a number of solid square houses in the main street, in which lived the doctor or "leech," the lawyer, the apothecary, and a number of well-to-do



London in 1761.
(From a contemporary map.)



London in 1861.
(From a contemporary map.)

tradesmen. But the total population of these towns was small compared with that of the villages, for England in 1750 was still mainly a country of peasants and farmers. These villages were very much as they had been in the Middle Ages, except that the lord of the manor had a better house, and there was now a parsonage in which lived the vicar of the parish. Apart from the squire and the parson, most of the inhabitants of the village were small farmers or farm labourers and their families.

To the traveller in the aeroplane the country-side surrounding the villages would have seemed very open and uncultivated. We shall see in a later chapter why it was that the fields had no hedges, and that enormous stretches of waste, moor, and forest land were allowed to exist.

But to the visitor from our own century probably the most startling difference in the look of the country-side would lie in the condition of the roads. Except for certain highways used by the stage-coaches and pack-horses, it must have looked as though there was almost no connection between one village and another. In some cases this really was the condition of affairs, for there were no roads worthy of the name, but only narrow lanes or rough cart tracks. In Devonshire, in 1750, there was not a single wheeled carriage; the farmers were shut off from their neighbours and from all means of getting to market. In Essex, which was a little better off because of its nearness to London, we are told that "a mouse could barely pass a carriage in its narrow lanes." In some parts the road was just an open track over the fields or the common; in others it was a narrow, deep, muddy lane. In bad

weather the road would sometimes be choked by a string of wagons which had stuck in its deep, miry ruts. If you read Scott's *Heart of Midlothian* you will get a good idea of what the journey from Edinburgh to London was like at this time. The roads were not only very few and bad, but travelling was exceedingly dangerous. Robbers were frequently met with even on the main roads, as the name "highwayman" tells



Post Chaise of 1801.

(W. H. PYNE : *Microcosm*, 1803-6.)

us. We are told that in 1793 Hounslow Heath and Finchley Common were fit only for "Cherokees and savages." The forests of Epping and Hainault were the abode of robbers and deer-stealers.

There would be, therefore, very little wheeled traffic to be seen from our aeroplane. Except for occasional post-chaises, coaches, and horse-riders, the roads were chiefly used by those who were going to market. The market produce was carried in bags slung over the backs of horses called pack-horses. Animals for sale were driven along the roads by their owners or keepers, and every morning at dawn the

roads leading into London and the large towns would be crowded with a procession of cows, sheep, geese, or turkeys, ambling, trotting, or waddling into the city, which had to buy its food from surrounding villages.

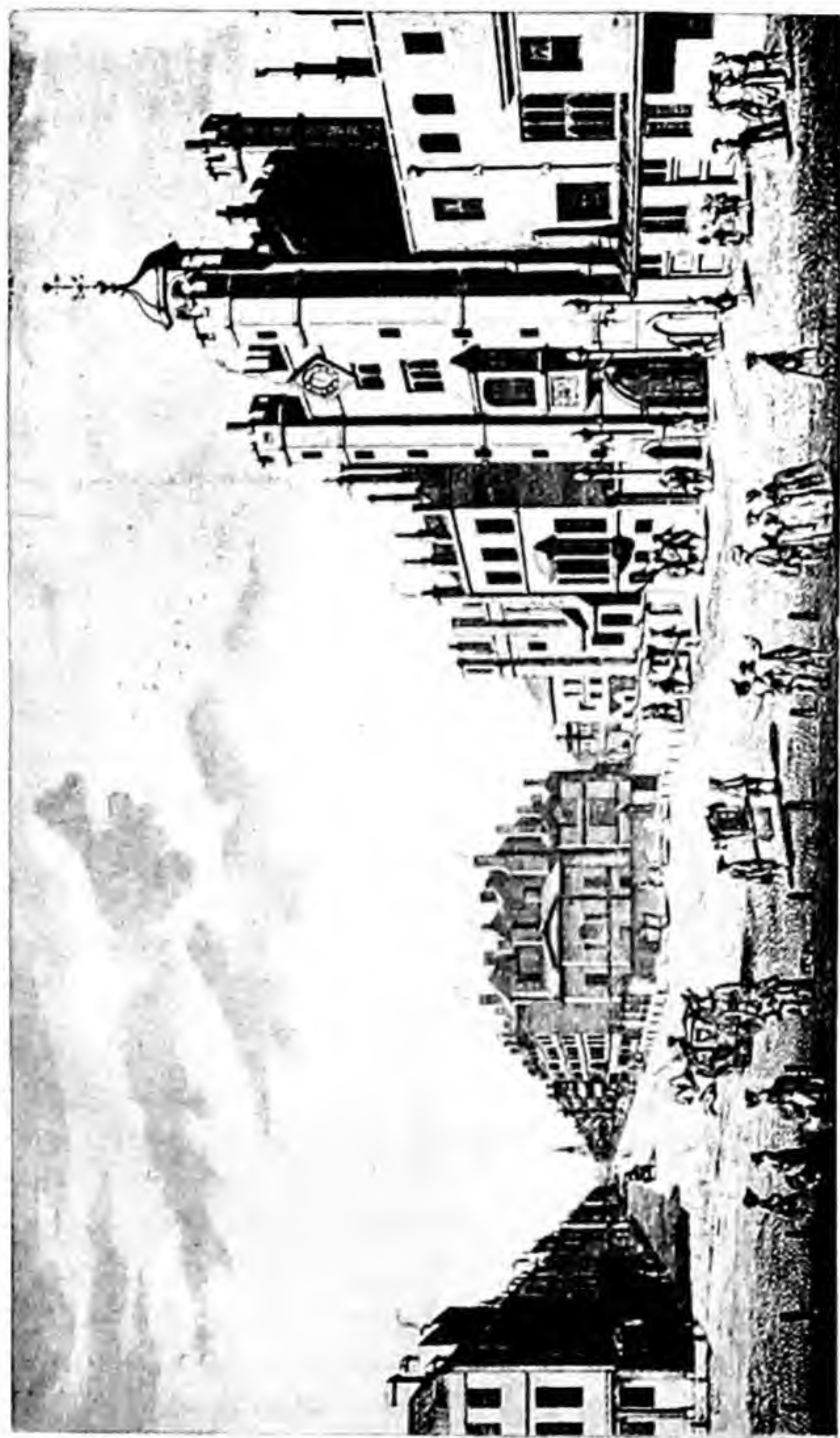
We can now realize what a big leap we shall have to take from 1750 to 1930. Nowadays nearly everything is done for us by machinery, and we take it for granted that our streets are well lighted, paved, and drained, our letters delivered quickly, telegraphs and telephones ready for us when we want them, trains, buses, and taxis prepared to take us about, and a policeman always round the corner. None of these things which seem so necessary to us existed in 1750. The town streets, if paved at all, were paved with cobbles, and the only lights were the lanterns of foot-travellers or the torches of link-boys who escorted citizens from house to house. The houses were usually lit by candles and rushlights.



An early postman.

Posts were very slow, and to get a letter was a great excitement. The mails in the middle of this century were carried by post-boys. Later in the century, when the roads were improved, mail-coaches were run between the large towns. Sir Walter Scott (1771-1832) tells us that people who lived in his time well remembered a mail from London to Edinburgh which consisted of only one letter.

Sedan chairs were used in the towns for carrying people of fashion ; others rode on horseback or walked, and did not—in winter, at least—go far from their

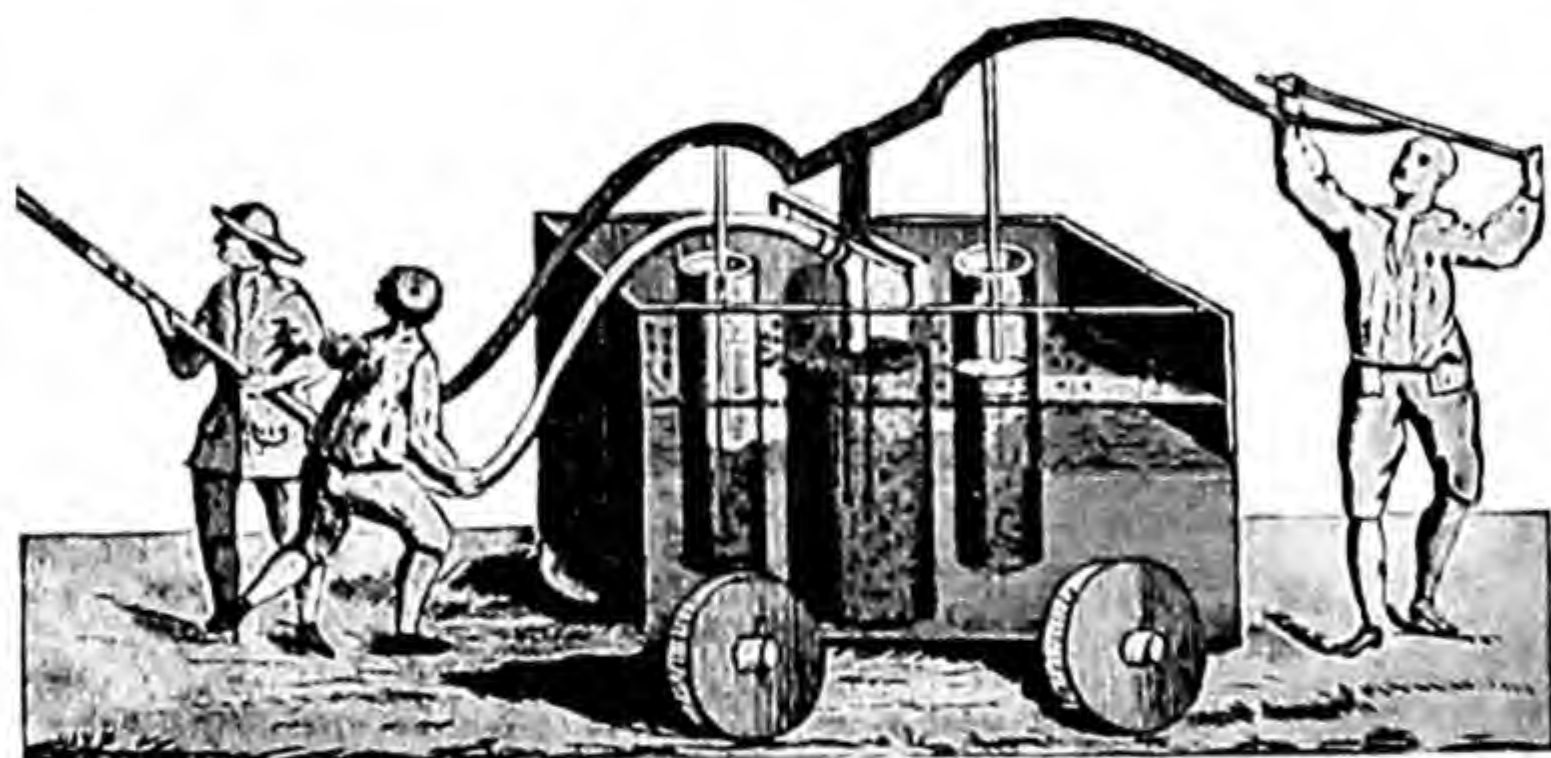


View of St. James's Palace and Pall Mall in 1741, showing cobbled roadway
and "parking place" for sedan chairs.

(From a contemporary print in the Crace Collection; British Museum.)

homes. There were very few shops, but a great many little markets and fairs, pedlars, hawkers with barrows, and street-sellers crying their wares.

Perhaps the most important thing of all to remember about the middle of the eighteenth century is that every one, even the town-dweller, could then enjoy fresh country air. Cities were so small that it was always



An early fire engine.
(*Universal Magazine*, 1751.)

possible for people to reach the open country in an evening's stroll. Although the towns were often overcrowded, insanitary, and badly paved, they were at least picturesque and interesting. There were no dingy suburbs, no acres of slums, no streets of back-to-back houses, no factory chimneys, no blackened air, as in our industrial towns and mining villages. All these things were still in the future. It was not

until the end of George III.'s reign that one read in a Manchester magazine: "The green grass and the healthful hayfield are shut out from our path. The whistling of birds is not for us—our melody is the deafening noise of the engine."

If you had mentioned the word "engine" in 1750 very few ordinary people would have understood what you meant, and even the cleverest of them knew less about engines than the smallest children in our schools to-day.

CHAPTER 2.—LIFE AND LABOUR

Village society—The wool industry—Apprenticeship—Trade and commerce before the Napoleonic wars

" When she is by I leave my work,
I love her so sincerely ;
My master comes, like any Turk,
And bangs me most severely."

CAREY : *Apprentice's Song* (1740).

WHEN we talk of Social and Industrial History we mean the history of how ordinary people employed their time and how they earned their living. We have gained some general idea as to what England looked like in the eighteenth century. We must now consider more fully how the people lived and worked in those days. Agriculture, we must remember, was still the mainstay of the country, and therefore village society was very important in this period.

" The Yeomen of Old England " had always played a brave part in her history. By a yeoman we usually mean a farmer who owns his own farm and is therefore a " freeholder." There were also tenant farmers, renting their farms from the squire, who was the chief landowner of the district. " The yeoman," said Fuller in the time of the Civil War, " wears russet clothes, but makes golden payment, having tin in his buttons and silver in his pockets." During the

eighteenth century these sturdy yeomen were beginning to decline in numbers. Some were bought out by neighbouring squires, others went to seek their fortunes in the towns. But in the middle of the century there were still many of them.

Besides the squire, the yeomen and tenant farmers, the labourers and other cottagers who just managed to feed themselves and their families, there was one other very useful member of the village society. This was the craftsman, who in his own home and with the help of his family carried on his trade. We shall have to consider later what is known in history as the Industrial Revolution, but we cannot understand how this great change affected the country until we learn something of the village craftsman whose livelihood the Industrial Revolution swept away.

From very early times in the history of this country the people had made their own clothing by spinning and weaving the wool which their sheep supplied. As the centuries went on and the population grew, England's woollen and cloth trade became very prosperous, ranking next to agriculture, her staple industry. Like all other trades at that time the woollen trade of the early eighteenth century was worked on what we call the "domestic system"—that is to say, it was carried on in the homes of the people. The cloth-worker's cottage, or his small house of stone or brick, contained a workshop inside, where the wool was carded and spun by his family. Daniel Defoe, who went on a tour through Great Britain in 1724, says of the Yorkshire villages, where the woollen trade was very active: "The houses are full of lusty fellows, some at the dye vat, some at the looms, others dressing the

cloths ; the women and children carding or spinning ; being all employed, from the youngest to the oldest."

The weaver was usually a worker on the land as well, having his own plot of ground near his house. This he could cultivate in his leisure time or when



Woman spinning (handwheel).
(W. H. PYNE : *Rustic Figures*, 1817.)

work was slack, and it provided him with food and exercise. Before the coming of machinery work was fairly regular, for fashions changed very slowly, and there was a steady market for home-spun "broadcloth." The weaver was well-off in 1760, for he could earn about 9s. 6d. a week, and the rent of his cottage and land would not be much more than 6d. a week. Meat

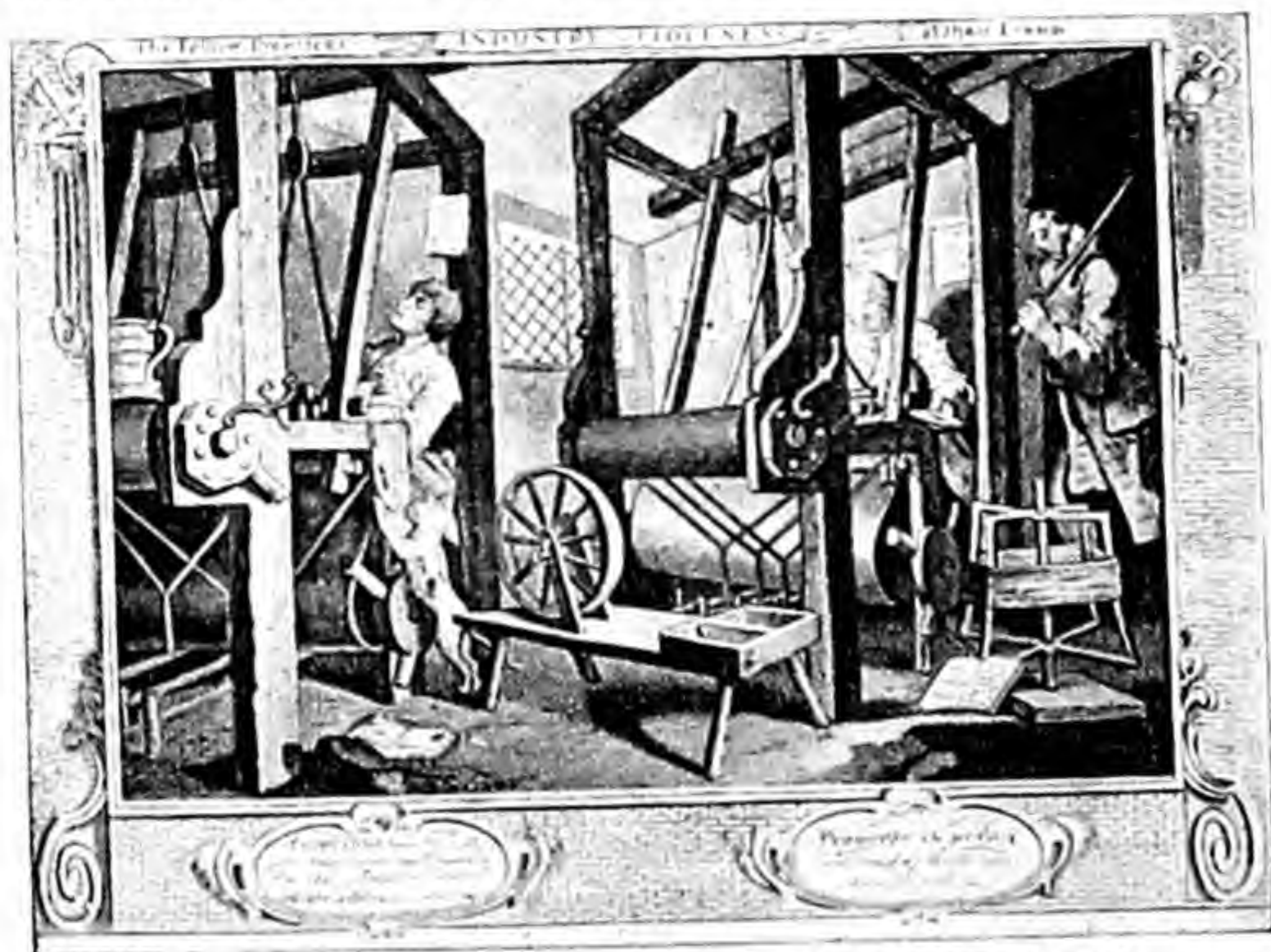
and bread were cheap, and he grew his own vegetables, and sometimes fruit as well.

The chief districts engaged in the cloth trade were East Anglia and Essex, the south-west country, and Yorkshire, but the spinning and weaving of wool were carried on in every village. The merchants who went from place to place would supply the spinners with wool, buy the yarn from them if it was not to be woven on the premises, supply yarn to the weavers, and again buy from them the finished cloth. Sacks of wool and bales of cloth loaded the patient pack-horses, which crossed the country from north to south and east to west. The wool markets and cloth fairs were the busy centres of English life.

Besides spinning and weaving there were other little village industries carried on in some of the cottage homes—clock-making, basket-weaving, and the trades of the wheelwright and carpenter among others. These were small family concerns, supplying only the wants of the village, and the earnings of the craftsman were only a small addition to what he earned by cultivating the land. The peasant and the craftsman were very often one and the same, and trades were just as much a part of village as of town life.

In the towns there were small traders and shopkeepers whose businesses were also organized on a family basis. One of the most noticeable and picturesque body of workers in the eighteenth century was that of the apprentices. The apprentice lived in his master's house, learning his trade and making himself generally useful. He would usually serve for seven years, and would then become a journeyman, who could ply the trade on his own account and who

might eventually become a master himself. Some of these apprentices were ill-used ; others were kindly treated. They had their own clubs, and games, and meeting-places. Apprentices seem to have played a



Idle and industrious apprentices at their looms (1747).
(From an engraving by W. Hogarth.)

rather noisy part in those days, and we often read about them in the books of the time. Simon Tappertit, the locksmith, in *Barnaby Rudge*, by Charles Dickens, is a good example of the eighteenth-century apprentice.

These busy households, where, with the master-craftsman and his family, lived one or more apprentices

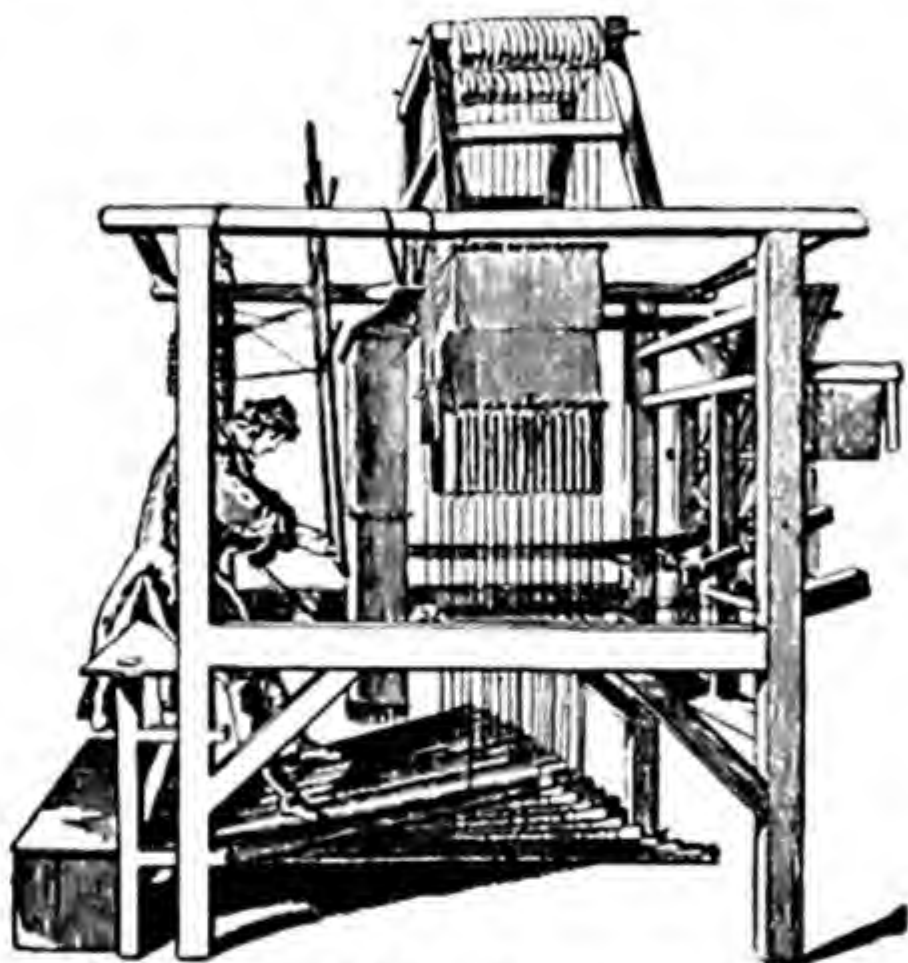
and sometimes a journeyman as well, are very characteristic of the time of which we are speaking. We must now ask ourselves how this domestic manufacturing and trading system affected the position of the country. Before the wars with Napoleon, how did England stand in matters of trade and commerce?

During the first part of the eighteenth century commerce made great strides, and England became the chief trading country, owing partly to the collapse of rival nations, and partly to the growth of English colonies. During the century France was beaten in the Seven Years' War, Spain had sunk into decay, Holland and Germany were torn by civil wars. The world's trade was open to Britain, and she had the new markets in Canada, America, and India to work for. At the end of the Seven Years' War (1763) Britain, with the prospect of a great empire in the New World, and with her influence in India supreme, was almost without a rival among European nations.

All this meant great activity in her little workshops, and Britain worked hard to supply goods to the world east and west, as well as to her own ever-growing population. Even in the sixteenth century Hakluyt had written, "Our chief desire is to find out ample vent of our woollen cloth, the naturall commoditie of this our Realme," and trading companies had grown to very great prosperity in the eighteenth century.

Britain's export trade began to grow. All that was wanted was more and still more goods to sell. The difficulties, however, were enormous. It seemed as though all the world was crying out to be served from British ships, and yet to meet even a small part of the need was a very slow business. Wheat and foodstuffs

had to be grown mainly in small patches on a wasteful system ; cloth and wearing apparel and furniture had all to be made laboriously and slowly by hand. All but a few of the roads were so bad that when the goods were ready they could only be carried to the coast on pack-horses or in slowly-jogging wagons.



An old hand-weaver.

Once on board ship they were at the mercy of wind and weather while the sailing ships bore them comparatively slowly from port to port.

The time was ripe for a vast change. If Britain was to seize her wonderful chances, industry would have to be revolutionized. Capital must be collected, factories must be built, farming must be made more efficient, roads must be improved, canals must be

dug. "Somehow or other," we can fancy the merchant of those days saying, "we must oil the wheels of trade and commerce so that they move more easily. We must try and speed things up. We want something that will help the workers to turn out more—some kind of machinery. Then we want some method of getting our goods more quickly to the coast—a special way of carrying them along roads of their own. And we must make our ships move faster and more reliably. I wonder if the next hundred years will give us what we want?" The answer to these wants and questions in men's minds came with the revolution in agriculture and industry about which we shall read in the next chapter.

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PART II.—BRIDGING THE CENTURIES
(1760-1840)

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CHAPTER 3.—THE AGRICULTURAL REVOLUTION

The open-field system—The enclosure movement and its results—Pioneers of farming—Cobbett's "Rural Rides"

"Princes and lords may flourish, or may fade ;
A breath can make them, as a breath has made ;
But a bold peasantry, their country's pride,
When once destroyed, can never be supplied."

GOLDSMITH : *The Deserted Village* (1770).

WE noted in the first chapter how very untidy the English country-side of the eighteenth century must have looked when compared with our neat arrangement of fields separated by hedges. Hundreds of villages dotted the landscape, not so very unlike those we can still find when we get away from the railways, but, as we have seen, the roads between them were very few and usually very bad, and the villages were often separated from each other by tracts of wild moorland or forest. Round each little cluster of houses would usually stretch great open fields without any hedges, but divided up by ditches or mounds into hundreds of different strips. To us it would have looked as though all the land of the village were cut up into allotments, except that all the strips in one great field would be planted in the same way, so that it would not look quite such a mixture as a collection of allotments does to-day.

Now when we speak of the Agricultural Revolution we mean the way in which England was changed from a land of small farmers to a land of large farmers. This change took place, speaking roughly, during the reign of George III.

We must see first of all how agriculture was being carried on when George III. came to the throne in 1760. England, we must again remind ourselves, was still very largely agricultural. There were few towns of any size, and no factory towns. Everything centred in village life, and without the village labourers the people of England could not have been fed, for at that time a very small amount of the food supply was brought in from abroad. There were fewer people in the whole of England and Wales at that time than there are in London to-day, and nearly all of them were supplied with food—corn, meat, poultry, butter, eggs, and vegetables—by their own villages. There were, you will remember, all kinds of little trades, too, carried on in the villages, and in many cases the villagers made clothes, furniture, baskets, and tools for each other. But we must first see how the village produced its food supply.

Although by 1760 the "open-field" system, as it was called, was gradually disappearing, it was still firmly established over a great part of England. It was a system that had served for hundreds of years, and although it did not work very efficiently it had one great advantage—practically every villager was a farmer of sorts, and had some land of his own. Some had a great deal, and some very little, but all had what is called a "stake in the country." Surrounding the village lay the three great "open fields,"

which were tilled according to the village rules. Usually one was planted with wheat and one with spring corn, while the third carried grass and was used for grazing. Each field was divided into a number of oblong strips, and each peasant farmer had so many strips allotted to him in each field according to his standing in the village. These strips were separated from each other by turf balks or furrows. There were no hedges or fences.

Farther away from the village would lie the waste ground—moor, or forest, or marsh. This was common land, where the villagers might gather firewood, graze their cows, sheep, and ponies, or feed their pigs and geese.

It would have seemed to us a very confused system. We should have seen twenty men working in one field, and been told that each man was ploughing or sowing his own bit of land without bothering very much how the rest of the field was getting on. We might also have seen a common on which fifty animals were grazing, and been told that these belonged to many different owners. Men would spend a long time walking and carrying their tools from their strips in one field to their strips in another. Their wives might waste an hour or two fetching in the family cow or pig from the farthest stretch of common land.

All the same there were not very many people to feed, nor were there many luxuries on which to spend money, so that it did not matter very much if the villagers were not very industrious and took rather a long time over their work. Village life was very slow and peaceful. All the food the villagers needed was produced by their own efforts—wheat, barley, oats,



* Grand Cricket Match played in Lord's Ground, Mary-le-bone, on June 20th (1793), and following day between the Earls of Winchelsea and Darnley for 1,000 Guineas.
(From a contemporary print in "The Sporting Magazine.")

rye, vegetables, and meat. The corn was ground at the village mill and the flour baked by the village women. Some of the village people were freeholders ; some held their cottages and land on certain terms ; others were just labourers, and worked for wages for the squire or some other big landholder ; but all had some land of their own. And even those who only owned a cottage garden could claim the use of the common land.

But after 1760 things began to change. The whole life of the village was altered by the "enclosure" movement, which was at its height during George III.'s reign. Parts of England—Kent, for instance—had been "enclosed" for a long time. By this we mean that each owner of land had his property arranged compactly together and enclosed by fences or hedges, and kept separate from that of his neighbours. But during the period of which we are speaking this kind of enclosure spread over the whole country. Instead of the bare open fields and commons, we get the "chessboard" country-side which we see to-day—a neat pattern of fields and hedges, with solidly-built farmhouses set among the trees.

The desire to do away with the old system arose from many causes. Firstly, people were beginning to learn more about farming and new methods of cultivating the soil, and they found it very absurd to be tied down to the custom of the three open fields and the common land. Nobody could try any experiments or use any new invention without getting in some one else's way. Secondly, the old system was very inefficient and wasteful—it prevented proper drainage and manuring, the growing of root crops,

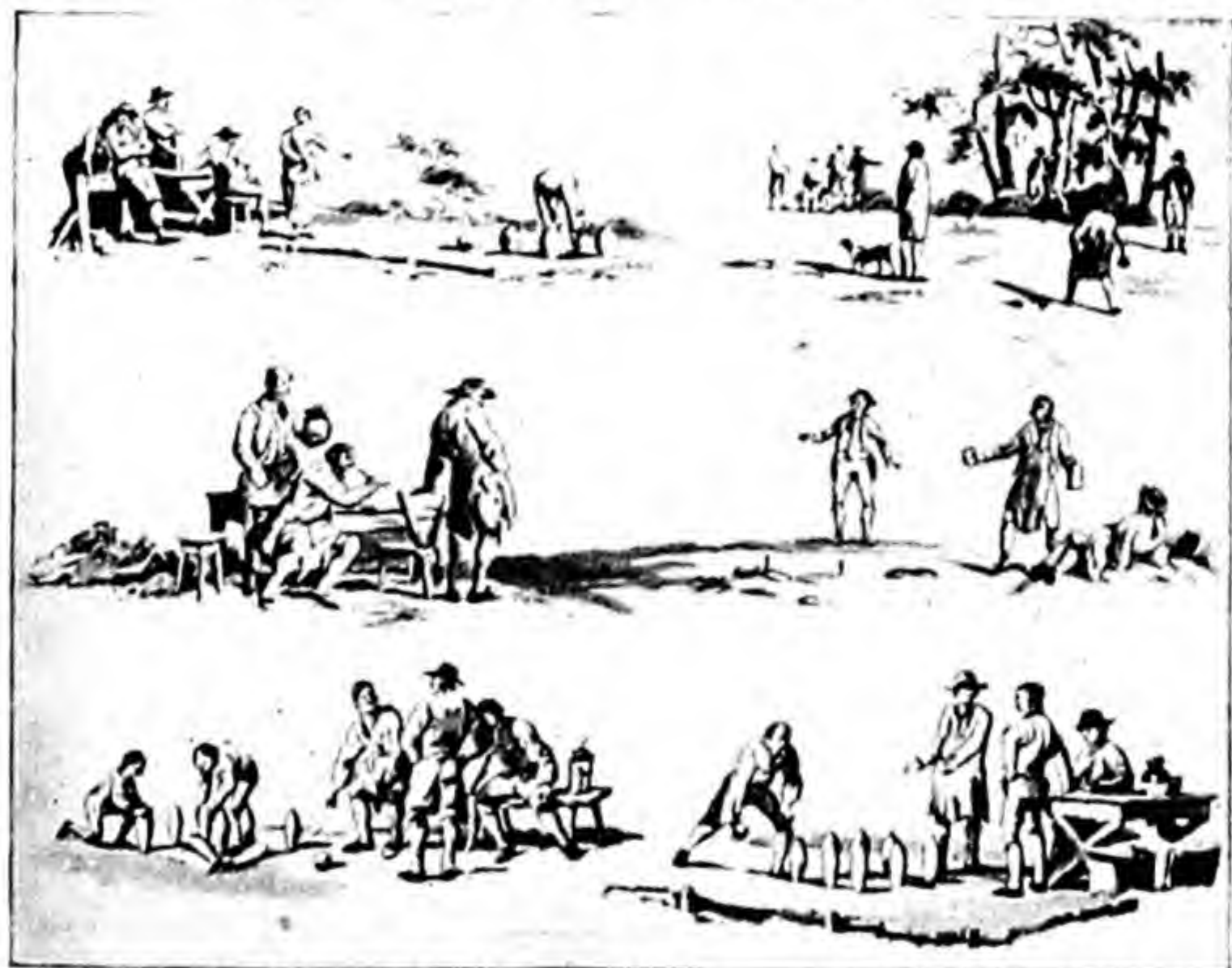
and the careful rearing of animals. It was all much too haphazard for really good results, and the villagers quarrelled a lot about their tools and their boundaries or "landmarks." Thirdly, the population of England was growing very fast, and there came from the new towns that were springing up a cry for more food, so that it became immensely important to grow more corn as quickly as possible.

Enclosures were usually made by one or more of the chief landowners of a village applying to Parliament for an Act of Enclosure. Between 1760 and 1840 nearly four thousand of these Acts were passed. It was only very seldom that the petitions which were drawn up by the villagers against the enclosure had any effect. When such an Act was passed, Enclosure Commissioners were sent down to investigate, and after deciding questions about ownership and common rights, they divided up the whole of the land between the different landowners, obliging each of them to fence his land and keep hedges in good condition until they were fully grown.

Sometimes it was the open fields that were enclosed, and sometimes the waste land or common. But in either case the result was usually the same—to make a few large landowners instead of a great many small ones. The small farmer who had only a cottage and a few strips of land was bought out by his more important neighbour, who collected all the strips he could so as to make a large farm for himself. If this neighbour was a man used to doing farm work, he would farm his own land. If, however, he was the squire or parson, or some other country gentleman, he might let out his new holding of land to a farmer,

who would rent it from him, and would be called a tenant farmer. The farmers who got possession of enclosed land would then build themselves farm-houses, find labourers to work for them, and do all they could to make their land pay.

Now when we speak of a revolution we mean a



Country Pastimes—Ninepins and Quoits.
(W. H. PYNE: *Microcosm*, 1803-6.)

very great change indeed—a complete upheaval. Why do we call this change in the system of agriculture a revolution? A revolution is usually a complete change for the better or for the worse, but the Agricultural Revolution in England was partly good and partly bad.

Firstly, it meant larger and better farms. Instead

of many little "allotment" holders muddling along with their old-fashioned ideas and small ill-kept plots, there were farmers whose farms included hundreds of these plots, and were carefully mapped out into fields which were properly fenced and drained. The land was, as a whole, better cultivated, and became more valuable; the farmers worked harder, and their fields yielded greater and better crops. In the latter part of George III.'s reign many people became very interested in farming, and it was quite the fashion for gentlemen to live on their estates and take an interest in the crops and the weather. Some farmers became very prosperous. In 1786 a certain writer, who was himself a farmer, declared that before enclosure a farmer would entertain his friends on part of his own hog and home-brewed ale, and would wear clothes spun by his wife from his own wool, but after enclosure he had an elegant sideboard laden with silver plate, would often spend £10 or £12 on one entertainment, while his daughter dressed like the daughter of a duke.

So England became a land of country gentlemen and farmers, and "John Bull," dressed like a prosperous farmer, became the typical Englishman.

But, in the second place, the Agricultural Revolution meant the decay of the "peasant proprietor" and of the life of the village. When the landlords enclosed the land and let it out to men who farmed on a large scale, the small freeholder and the man who held a little land and had rights over the common had to give up his land and his claims. It is true that he was often given a sum of money as compensation, but this was usually soon spent in standing treat to his friends, or in looking for work, or in keeping his

THE NEW
Horse-Houghing Husbandry :
OR, AN
ESSAY
ON THE
PRINCIPLES
OF
Tillage *and* Vegetation.

Wherein is Shewn,
A METHOD of INTRODUCING
A Sort of
Vineyard-Culture into the *Corn-Fields*,
In Order to
INCREASE their PRODUCT, and DIMINISH
the COMMON EXPENCE,
By the USE of
INSTRUMENTS lately Invented.

L O N D O N :
Printed for the AUTHOR, in the Year M.DCC.XXXI.

family while he was idle. Even if the smallholder were granted a little farm by the Enclosure Commissioners, he usually found the expense of fencing it and keeping it in good order too great, and was glad to sell it to a large farmer whose land lay next to it. Perhaps he was only a cottager with the right to take turf, gorse, or brushwood from the common for fuel, and to let his geese, or pony, or cow graze there. The common might now be enclosed, and belonged to one or more large landowners. His means of livelihood were gone. What was he to do, and where should he go? In that event he probably either went to seek work in the rapidly-growing towns where, as we shall see later, factories were springing up; or he became an agricultural labourer. Not only the cottagers but many of the sturdy yeomen of old days were obliged to give up farming their own land and work for wages as the servants of some one else.

Let us take examples of both the good and the bad results of the Agricultural Revolution.

Once the land was enclosed and in the hands of the great landholders many of them worked very hard to make the soil fruitful and to make farming pay. All through the eighteenth century improvements had been going on. Jethro Tull (1674-1741), a farmer who lived the life of a hermit and was hampered by illness, discovered many new ways of choosing the right seed. He also began to drill seed in furrows instead of scattering it broadcast, and this method proved very economical and successful. Tull was perhaps the first really scientific farmer, and his ideas soon spread.

Lord Townshend (1674-1738), or "Turnip"

Townshend as he was nicknamed, encouraged the growing of root crops and grasses, turnips and clover. By this means food was provided for animals during the winter, so that there was no need to kill them all



Thomas William Coke (with distant view of Holkham Hall). See page 42.

(From an engraving by George Garrard, 1806.)

off and salt down their flesh at the end of autumn, and part of the land did not lie fallow every three years, as formerly. More animals could be kept, and this meant more manure to enrich the soil, more corn, and more fresh meat.

Robert Bakewell (1725-95) paid great attention to the better breeding of farm stock. He showed how cattle and sheep could be bred so as to give the best joints, and thus increase the country's meat supply.

Thomas Coke of Norfolk (1752-1842) was the greatest of all the pioneers of large farms. He believed that the more money you put into the land the more it would yield, and by careful cultivation and wise spending he turned his wretchedly barren estate into a "gold mine." He was a great character, and when he held his annual sheep-shearing, hundreds of people from all over Europe used to come to watch and learn.

Arthur Young (1741-1820), a clever expert on agricultural questions, noticed at the very end of the century a great improvement in the attitude of the farmers. He called them "industrious, active, and enlightened," and said that he had met with many who "mounted their nags and quitted their homes" to learn what was taking place in other parts of the kingdom.

That is the good side of the Agricultural Revolution. On the other hand we have a picture of extreme distress. This same Arthur Young, although he was a keen champion of enclosures, tells us that all the poor man knew was that "he had a cow, and an Act of Parliament had taken it away from him." The landlords who sat in Parliament and ruled the countryside as Justices of the Peace thought a good deal about increasing their own estates and the food supply of the nation, but very little about the effect of the change upon many of the poor people of the countryside. Not only had the villager lost his cow, his fuel from the common, his rushlights, and his small plot of land,

and become a landless labourer, but he now had to buy his food in the open market, with prices rising all the time ; while he could no longer share in the village industries, for these were being largely destroyed by another great change known as the Industrial Revolution.

Many villagers sent petitions to Parliament protesting against some enclosure. " A ruinous Effect of this Enclosure," says a petition in 1797, " will be the almost depopulation of their town, now filled with bold and hardy Husbandmen . . . and driving them, from Necessity and Want of Employ, in vast crowds, into manufacturing towns, where the very Nature of their Employment, over the loom or the forge, soon may waste their strength."

It was this gradual disappearance of the " bold and hardy husbandmen " which so sorely distressed a great leader and friend of the common people—William Cobbett (1762–1835). Born the son of a farmer, he had an adventurous life, and finally gave up his whole time to urging the cause of parliamentary reform and the relief of the poor and the oppressed. We shall hear of him again when we come to speak of the Parliamentary Reform movement, but we must always remember him when we think of the agricultural labourer of this period, because he gives in his writings such a vivid account of rural England at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

When Cobbett was over sixty he wrote a book called *Rural Rides*, in which he described his journeys on horseback all over the English country-side. He noted what the soil and trees were like, how the land was being cultivated, how the new landlords were managing their estates, and how the peasants were

faring. He wanted to win back the age of "Merrie England," when the yeomen and the village craftsmen were the mainstay of the country, "when every labouring man was clothed in good woollen cloth; and when all had a plenty of meat and bread and beer."



(From a drawing by D. MacLise, R.A.)

Instead, he found an England where labourers' cottages were "houses made of mud and straw, bits of glass or of old cast-off windows, without frames or hinges frequently, merely stuck in the mud wall. Enter them and look at the bits of chairs or stools, the wretched boards tacked together to serve for a table, the floor of broken pebbles or of the bare ground; look at the thing called a bed, and survey the rags on the backs of the inhabitants."

The changes due to enclosure took place at the very worst time for the poor labourers, because Britain was engaged from 1793 to 1815 in the war with France. As always happens in war time, prices were very high, and in addition there was a run of bad harvests, so that food was dreadfully scarce and the poor suffered acute distress. We shall read in later chapters how the landlords tried to relieve the distress, and how at last some of the labourers tried to revolt.

CHAPTER 4.—THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

Inventions in the textile, coal, and iron trades—The coming of steam-power—Effects of the Industrial Revolution

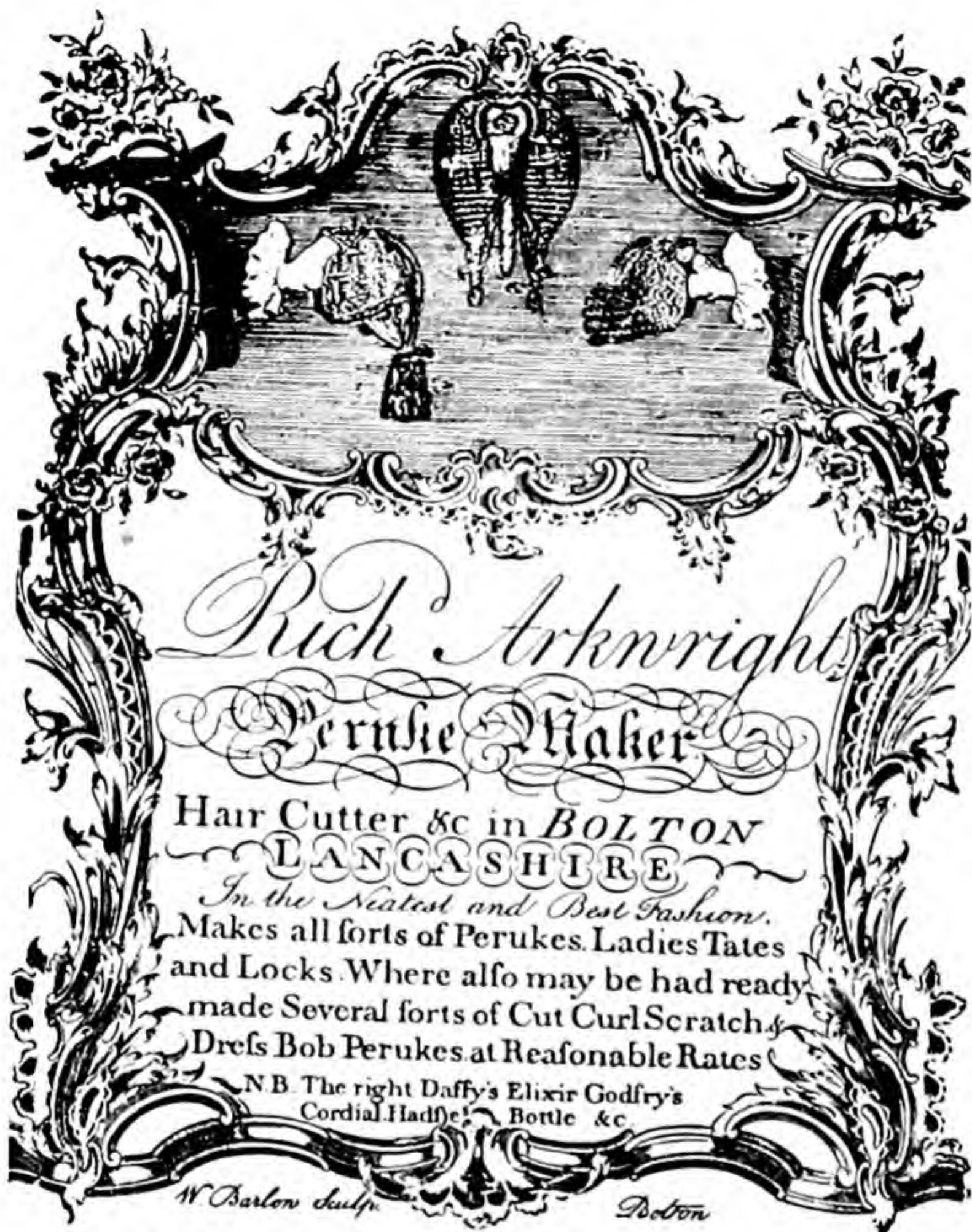
“ Times are altered ; trade’s unfeeling train
Usurp the land and dispossess the swain ;
Along the lawn, where scattered hamlets rose,
Unwieldy wealth and cumbrous pomp repose.”

GOLDSMITH : *The Deserted Village* (1770).

WE have seen how peacefully the industries, or rather the crafts of England, were carried on in the eighteenth century. But during the years between 1760 and 1840 these little industries were seized upon by a whirlwind, uprooted, tossed about, bent into unrecognizable shapes, and finally hurled together in great untidy heaps. This sudden and fierce storm, which in a few years so shattered the foundations of society, we have learned to call the Industrial Revolution.

The Industrial Revolution changed England from an agricultural to a manufacturing country, and from a land of villages to one of towns. Instead of the women and children spinning outside their cottage doors, we see them in factories winding spindles driven by machinery ; instead of the stage-coach rumbling along the highway, we see the railway train. The Age of the Machine has begun.

A series of wonderful inventions within a very short



Rich Arkwright
Peruque Maker
 Hair Cutter &c in **BOLTON**
LANCASHIRE
In the Neatest and Best Fashion.
 Makes all sorts of Perukes. Ladies Tates
 and Locks. Where also may be had ready
 made Several sorts of Cut Curl Scratch &
 Dress Bob Perukes at Reasonable Rates
 N.B. The right Daffy's Elixir Godfry's
 Cordial Hadfield's Bottle &c
W. Barlow sculp. *Bolton*

An advertisement of Richard Arkwright, who was at
 one time a barber.

space of time may be said to have ushered in the Industrial Revolution. Inventions do not usually come to the fore unless there is a real need for them, and these were no exceptions to the rule.

Weaving was done entirely by the man of the house, but his wife and children spun the yarn, and sometimes, if he had a large family, he could not work fast enough to keep pace with them. As a result, Kay invented the flying shuttle in 1733, which made the weaver's work much quicker. In a short time the weaver began to get ahead of the spinners, who kept him waiting for yarn. This condition of things lasted a long time, and spinners were very much in demand, until, in 1770, James Hargreaves patented the spinning "jenny." This was an arrangement by which the same wheel worked a number of spindles, so that many threads could be spun together.

The jenny was improved upon in 1771 by Richard Arkwright's water-frame, which was an ingenious and delicate machine, worked by a water-mill. Arkwright himself built the first spinning factory. Then, in 1779, came Samuel Crompton's "mule," a machine which combined both the others and also superseded them, as it could spin a very fine yarn. The mule was gradually improved, until now, by its aid, one spinner can work 12,000 spindles. This will give you some idea of the change which only one invention can make in an industry. The worker who, in the early eighteenth century, was sitting at her wheel holding her one spindle, is to-day tending a machine which drives thousands of spindles.

So much for the spinners. The hand-loom weavers were now in a very good position, because they were

in great demand to weave the enormous quantities of yarn which the new machines produced. It was obvious that to level things again something must be done to speed up the work of the weaver. And so it happened, for in 1785 a clergyman named Edmund Cartwright patented a power-loom. This was first



Richard Arkwright.

worked by water-power, and was not very efficient, but quite early in the next century it began to be improved and used a great deal, until finally, after 1840, it drove first cotton-weaving, then woollen, and then linen-weaving into the factories. These inventions completely changed what are known as the textile trades. Machinery was first used in the cotton trade, which soon grew so rapidly that it displaced the

woollen trade as England's chief industry. Wool, however, was soon revolutionized also, then linen and silk, until by the end of the century comparatively little work was done by hand in these trades.

But before we consider the tremendous results of this change, we must go back and watch a part of the Industrial Revolution which was just as important as the inventions in the textile trades. This was the development of the coal and iron trades.

In the eighteenth century there began to be a serious shortage of timber, while the enclosures had taken away from the people much of the brushwood and turf. As a result, the iron industry, which was a small one and which used wood for its furnaces, found it impossible to carry on, and began to die out.

As usual, the solutions to these difficulties came very soon after they had made themselves felt. So far as the iron trade was concerned, the problem was met by a series of inventions from 1760 to 1788, beginning with the use of coal and coke for smelting iron ore, and so doing away with the need for wood and charcoal. This, of course, meant a still greater demand for coal from the now revived and rapidly-growing iron industry. But coal-mining in the middle of the eighteenth century was still a very primitive affair. The pits were not very deep, and although Thomas Newcomen had, by 1712, invented a steam-engine for pumping water out of the mines, the difficulty of getting the coal up, and once it was up of transporting it from one place to another, was very great.

Soon after the beginning of George III.'s reign, then, we see this position. In the textile trades the

jennies and mules were becoming more complicated and expensive, so that they were not often found in the cottage home, but were set up in little workshops, lofts, barns, and sheds. Sometimes horses were used to work them, sometimes a water-wheel, and although for a long time they were mainly worked by hand, this work was becoming a very difficult and laborious business. In the iron trade everything depended on coal and yet more coal. Coal-mining itself was at a standstill—like the textiles, this industry was waiting for the great motive force which was to complete the Industrial Revolution. This force was, of course, steam-power.

In 1769, the year in which Wellington and Napoleon were born, James Watt, a Scotsman, patented his steam-engine. For years men had tried to harness steam and make it perform some useful work, and Newcomen had indeed invented a pumping engine many years earlier. But Watt's steam-engine was the first really practical one. At first it, too, was used to pump water from the mines as well as to bring the coal to the surface and to sink the shafts. Watt's invention was not much used until he became partner with a Birmingham man named Boulton, and together they produced a great many much-improved engines. After 1782 Watt's engines began to be used to drive the machines in factories, and steam-power became the foundation of modern English industry.

We are so used to steam-engines working out of sight and doing so much of the world's work that it is difficult for us to imagine a world without them. They can drain the mines, work the mills, drive machinery, bore tunnels, haul goods, and transport

people from place to place, even across oceans, deserts, and mountains, and do many other useful things.

The tremendous change wrought by Watt's steam-engine, and all the developments and improvements of it, makes the end of the eighteenth century a very important time in England's social and industrial history. Before we look at the effect that the use of steam-power had on the lives of the people, let us see in what way it helped the most important industries.

Cotton and the other textile industries had been, as we saw, waiting for some power more sure and more readily available than that of water, which was being used to work the mills. As the steam-engines gradually became plentiful and were used to work the spinning machines and looms, the mills became larger, thou-



James Watt.

sands of workpeople were employed, and during the years 1760 to 1840 the output of cotton increased a hundredfold. In 1764 the export of cotton was only one-twentieth of that of woollen goods, but early in the nineteenth century it had risen to be the greatest in the kingdom.

To the coal industry steam-power meant new life—and a life of tremendous vigour. It was used to sink shafts, to clear mines, bring up coal, and transport it. This change very soon brought about the opening up

of all the big coalfields in the North and Midlands, South Wales, and Southern Scotland ; and industries sprang up near them, to get a supply of coal. The



Crank mill of 1790. (Early steam-driven mill.)

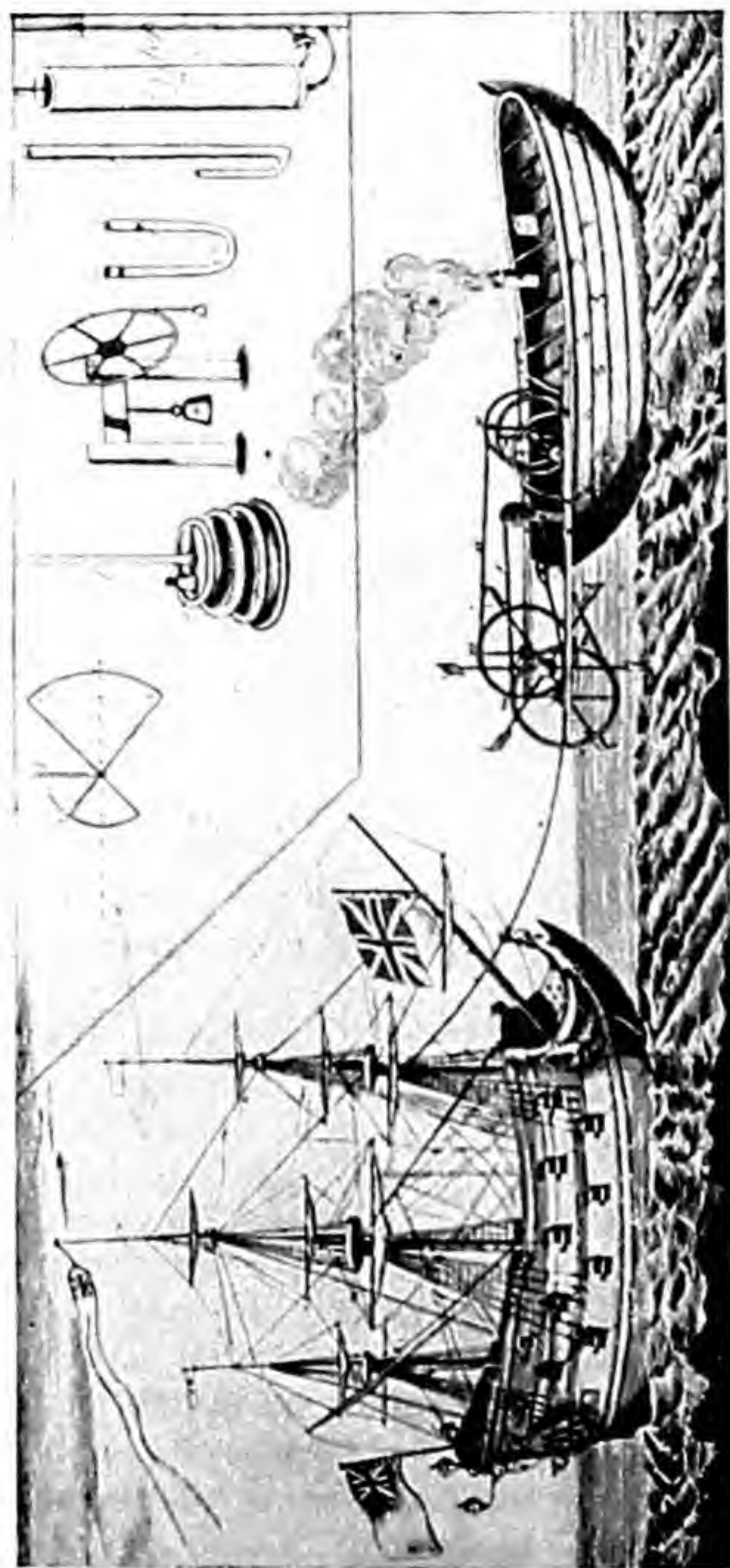
(W. SMITH : *Rambles about Morley*, 1846.)

advantage of steam-power affected every important industry, and was, of course, especially noticeable in the iron trade, which had been waiting so long for a plentiful supply of fuel. In forty years the production of iron increased tenfold, and the use of coal in

smelting produced the great iron manufacturing district in the West Midlands which we call the Black Country.

During George III.'s reign coal and steam became the two chief forces in British industry. Like two thunder clouds behind which the sun hides, they gradually spread across the sky, throwing a dark shadow over the land beneath. Coal-mining wanted steam-engines, and steam-engines wanted coal. Iron wanted coal, and steam-engines and machinery were made of iron. Factories were started to make engines and machinery and to repair them, and so a great engineering industry grew up, employing a large number of mechanics. Round the Yorkshire and Nottinghamshire coalfields were grouped the woollen, engineering, and steel industries, lace and hosiery; round the Lancashire coalfield, the cotton trade and the chemical industries; round the Staffordshire coalfield, pottery, hardware, and iron; and on the South Wales coalfields, iron and smelting.

You can easily picture what a vast difference these great coalfields and the factories round them made to the appearance of England. Towns like Newcastle, Sheffield, and Birmingham grew bigger and uglier, and the country-side seemed to blacken and wither for miles around them. But we must not look upon the Industrial Revolution as entirely a bad thing. The old system of home workshops, apprentices, and simple country life sounds very attractive, but it was not always an easy or pleasant mode of living. Machines, if they are carefully used, can be a great boon to men by lightening their work and giving them many comforts and luxuries. This is especially clear when



" A new-invented machine for carrying vessels against wind and tide or in a calm."

(From the description of a patent granted to Jonathan Hulls in 1737.)

we look at the crowning gift of the Industrial Revolution—the railway engine. We shall read later about the revolution in transport, but we must remember that it was a part of the same great movement. The demand for coal led to the need for deeper mines, and so the steam-engines of Newcomen and Watt were invented. When coal became plentiful new roads and canals and engines were wanted to transport it, and so



A train on the Manchester-Liverpool Railway, about 1830.

in the early nineteenth century the steam locomotive began to come into use.

George Stephenson, the son of a collier, who began life as a herd boy, and who educated himself so that he could become a colliery engineer, built the first really practical locomotives and planned the first railways. In 1830 the Manchester-Liverpool Railway was opened, and Stephenson's engine, the "Rocket," reached a speed of thirty miles an hour. This was the real beginning of the railway age.

Now let us glance very briefly at the effects of the Industrial Revolution. Firstly, there is the effect on Britain's position among the great Powers. There is no doubt that the vast wealth and resources which the new textile and mining industries gave to Britain helped her through the war with Napoleon. She was one of the few countries of the West in which the war was not actually being carried on, so that her factories and mines were not disturbed.



George Stephenson.

Her discovery of steam-power and her use of it placed her, in a short time, fifty years ahead of the other European nations. Coal and iron were essential for factories, and in the nineteenth century it was the three chief coal and iron countries which came to the fore—the United States, Germany, and Great Britain—and of these Great Britain was easily first in the race.

Secondly, let us consider the effect on population. During the sixty years of the reign of George III. the population of Great Britain increased from seven and a half to fourteen millions—that is to say, it nearly doubled. This increase was partly due to improvements in sanitation, in medicine, and in the care of the sick, which all came about in the eighteenth century. And it is interesting to see how very differently the fourteen millions of 1820 lived from the seven and a half millions of 1760. Certainly they could not have been supported by the old agricultural England.

It was the new industrial England that made it possible to feed and clothe and house them.

There were two directions in which people moved while the Industrial Revolution was going on. They moved from the country into the town, and from the South into the Midlands and the North. We shall see in a later chapter what the new towns were like. Here we need only note that for two reasons the village and country workers swarmed into the already crowded factory districts. Firstly, the system of enclosures had taken away their livelihood and forced them to seek other work ; secondly, there was no longer any demand for the yarn which the women and children spun in their homes. Spinning had moved into the factories before the end of the century ; weaving was shortly to do so, and so were many other little village trades, such as basket-making, coach-building, clock-making, milling, and so on. The villagers not only lost their land and their labour, but their little home workshops were no longer wanted. They gradually drifted into the towns, where the new factories seemed to offer the only chance of a living. The village, with all its craftsmen and little industries gone, became rather a dull and slow place. The only people left in it were the landlords, farmers, and agricultural labourers, and they had very little else but the land and the weather to think and talk about.

Now the new factory towns were mostly in the Midlands and the North of England, whereas the South had previously been the most thickly populated. The Industrial Revolution meant a huge change over of population from the South to the Midlands and the North. This was, of course, because the large coal-

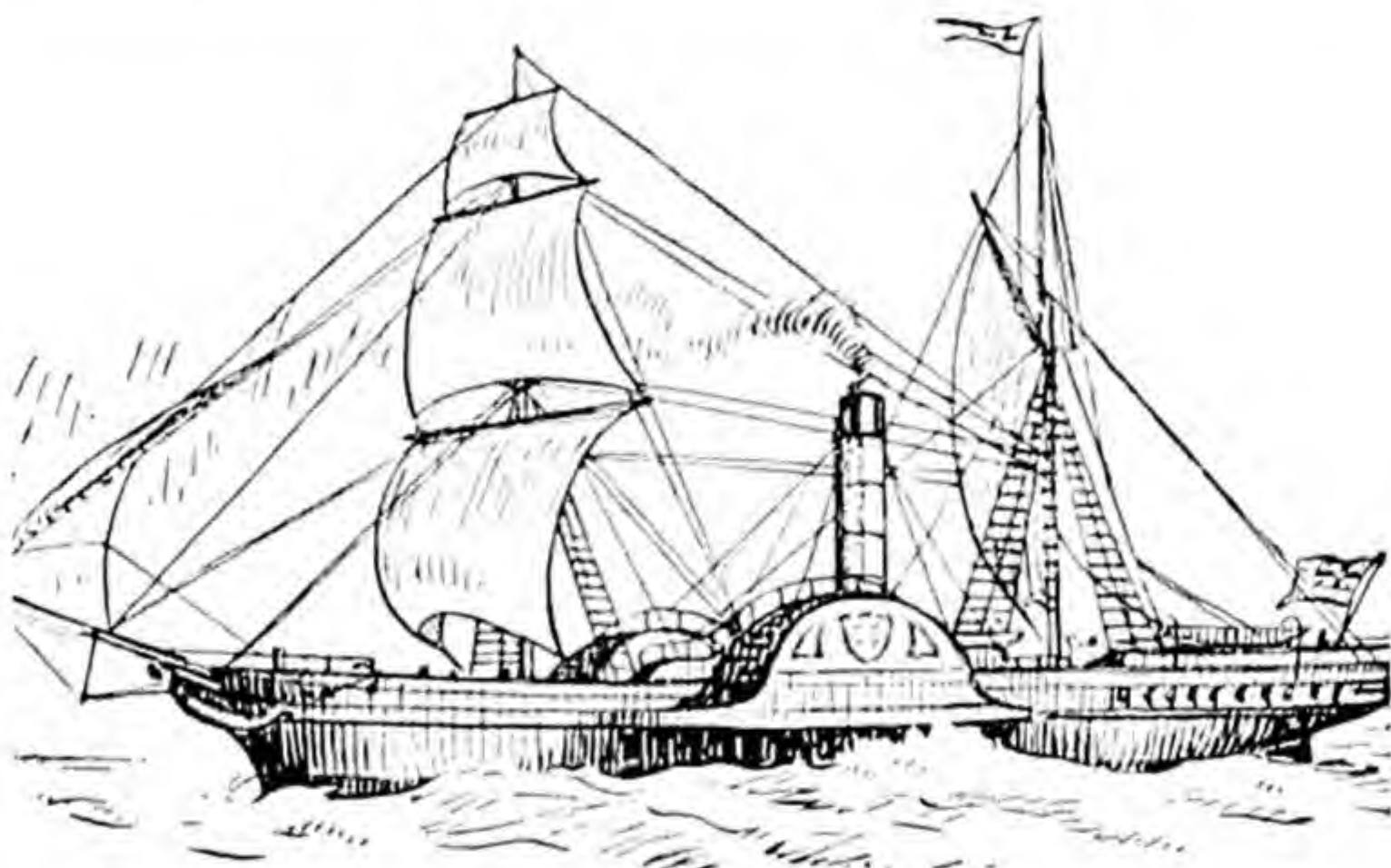
fields were in the Midlands and the North, and the new industries settled down near them. Counties like Norfolk and Wiltshire had been very prosperous manufacturing districts, but they now decayed. In 1700 the most populous counties were Middlesex, Somerset, Gloucestershire, and Wiltshire. In 1800 they were Middlesex, Lancashire, Yorkshire, and Staffordshire. Lancashire had a good port, cheap coal, and a damp climate, which was especially suited for the cotton trade. The woollen trade left the South-west and East and concentrated in Yorkshire, where the factories were being built. The iron trade, which now needed coal for smelting, left Sussex and travelled to the North, the Midlands, and Wales.

We can tell a little of what this change meant by noticing the growth in population of the towns. Manchester grew from 41,000 in 1774 to 187,000 in 1821. Between 1794 and 1830 Bradford, Leeds, Sheffield, and Birmingham all doubled their populations. In 1760 Oldham had about 300 inhabitants, in 1821 it had 38,000. The South of England was left green and peaceful. The Midlands and the North became black, ugly, and overcrowded.

The third effect of the Industrial Revolution was on the condition of the people and of their work. Of the conditions in the factories we shall read in a later chapter. Of one effect, however, we must speak here, namely, of the use of machinery on the hand-workers. The spinners, as we have seen, were mainly women and children, and although they were at first thrown out of work by the new machines, they soon found employment in the factories because their labour was cheap.

But of the weavers, both of cotton and wool, a

very different story must be told. Thousands of these men were working their hand-loom in their own homes, very often in cellars or garrets, and under unhealthy and stifling conditions. The weavers in the towns were inclined to be pale and undersized. In the country, where they had a garden and perhaps a little



The "Sirius" (1838).

(The first British steamer to cross the Atlantic. The voyage took 17 days.)

farming to do, conditions were better. When spinning was first done by machinery, and enormous quantities of yarn turned out, the weavers were much in demand, and became very prosperous at the turn of the century. But after 1800, when Cartwright's power-loom began to come into general use, the hand-loom weavers fell on very hard times. By 1808 the weavers were receiving half the wages they had earned in 1800, and were

almost at starvation level. "The average wages of cotton weavers," said a petition from Bolton, "do not exceed 5s. per week, though other trades in general earn from 20s. to 30s. per week." Again it was said, "The cotton weavers, when their work is done, know not what they shall receive, as that depends on the goodness of the employer's heart."

During the war with Napoleon, and for many years afterwards, the working classes of Britain were in a condition of great misery, and those who still tried to carry on handicraft trades were often in want. The revolution had come very suddenly and severely, and nobody had given any thought to the problem of how its havoc could best be remedied. We have learnt a good deal since then. Somebody has said that "the steam-engine was invented too soon," meaning that although it had great power for good, men had not the knowledge or the desire to use it properly. If another Industrial Revolution were to overwhelm us to-day we should probably have the sense and humanity to see that factories were properly built and ventilated; that the workpeople did not work too many hours per day, and that little children went to school instead of into factories; that people did not flood out the towns until some arrangement had been made to house them, and that their houses were built in a sound and sanitary way.

It will be seen more clearly, as we read farther, that the Industrial Revolution, which has made and marred the England of to-day, resulted in a muddle, and it took the whole of the nineteenth century to try and straighten out that muddle.

CHAPTER 5.—CAPITAL AND WAGES

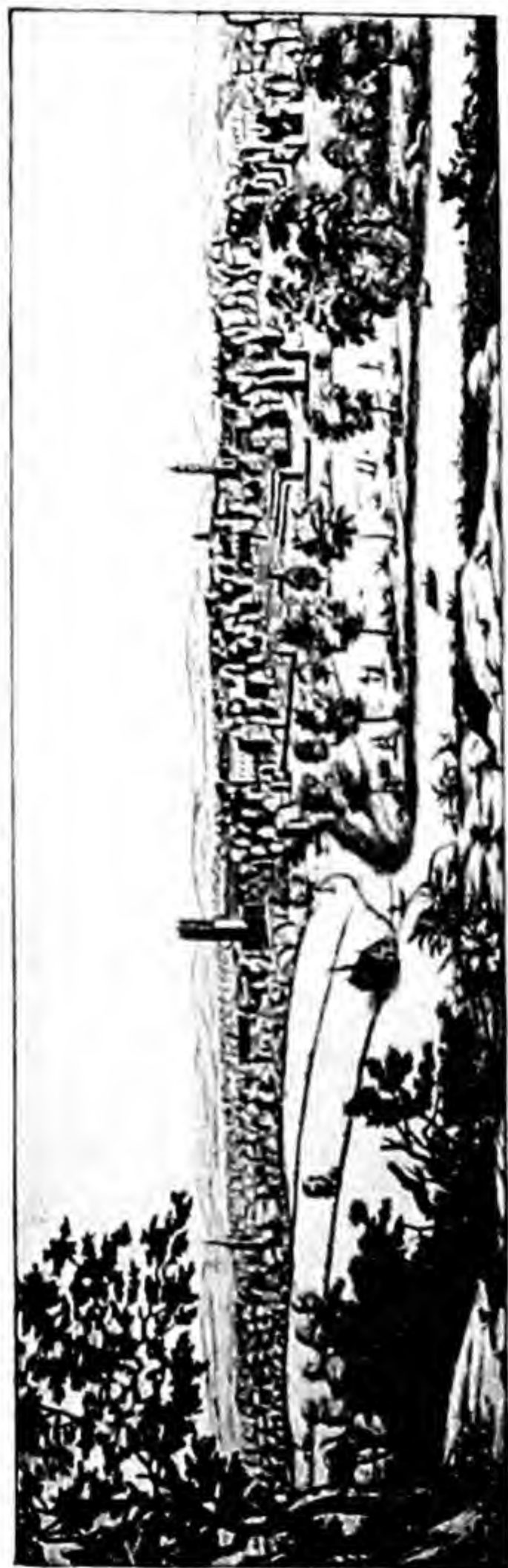
Growth of capitalism in the textile trades—Merchants and manufacturers—Causes of capitalist enterprise—Banks—Types of employer and factory worker

" The seed ye sow another reaps ;
The wealth ye find another keeps ;
The robes ye weave another wears ;
The arms ye forge another bears."

SHELLEY : *Song to the Men of England* (1819).

WHEN we talk about a capitalist, we usually mean a man who has saved or, somehow or other, accumulated funds, and who uses these funds to build up or extend a business. This business may be a dairy or a market garden, or a coal mine or a match factory, or any other kind of business where workers are employed for wages. It is clear that if a man wants a building in which to carry on his trade, and materials and machinery to work with, and other men and women to do the work, he must pay for all these necessities ; that is to say, he must have capital.

Now we have seen that in the eighteenth century most of the things that people needed, such as clothing and furniture and metal goods, were made by men and women working with their families in their own homes. They certainly needed some money to pay for their tools, and the wool or wood or metal which they used, but they could probably buy these out of



Manchester in 1728.
(From a contemporary print.)

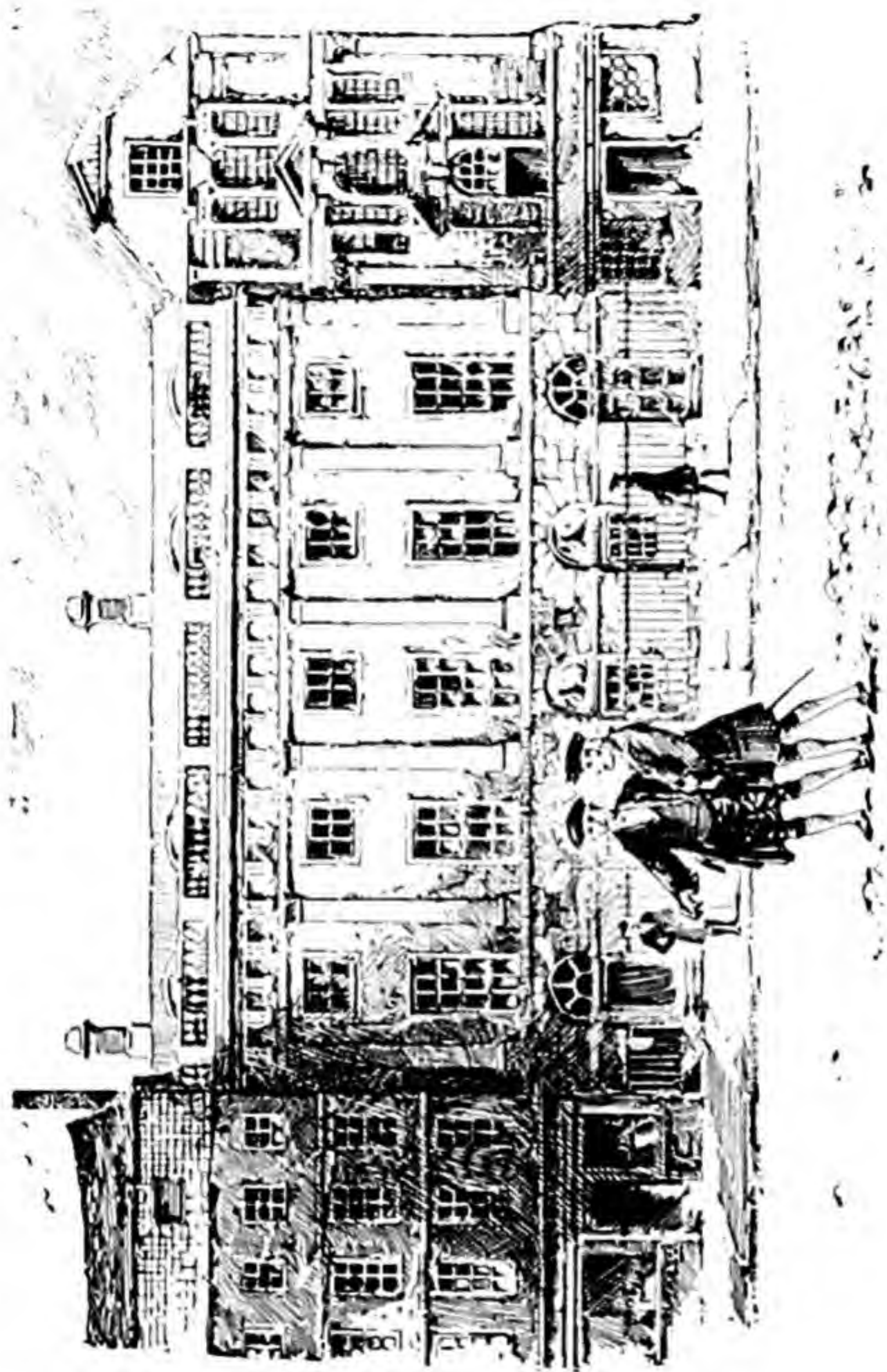
what they earned, and did not need a fund of money, or capital, because they had no big expenses and no wages to pay.

The two chief changes brought about by the Industrial Revolution were the growth of factories and the growth of capitalism. Both of these existed early in the eighteenth century—a silk factory was set up in 1718, and Arthur Young, in the sixties, mentions mills of over 100 workers—but they were not common. In the nineteenth century, after steam-power had come into general use, the capitalist and the factory were the best-known features of English industry.

The capitalist gradually came into existence when one man, either a merchant or a master-craftsman, became very important in his district

because he had managed to save money. If he were a merchant or middleman, he would use his capital to buy large stocks of raw material, wool or cotton. He would then travel round, distributing this material to the spinners, and later collecting the yarn from them and delivering it to the weavers, and again fetching the finished cloth or cotton, and taking it to the market or sending it abroad. The workers were paid by him, and this system saved them a great deal of trouble. Instead of their being obliged to find out where the best materials could be obtained and then bargaining for them, their materials were brought to the door, and they were also saved all the trouble of finding markets and customers. This capitalist middleman was a well-known figure in the eighteenth century and even earlier. As Britain gained new colonies and new markets abroad he became even more important, because he was able, by his greater wealth and wider knowledge, to obtain supplies of material from abroad, and to find out new foreign markets which the workers would never have been able to reach without him.

If the capitalist were a master-craftsman he would, in time, probably become so rich that he no longer wished his family to work. He would then buy looms or stocking-knitting frames, and let them out to workers who worked only for him. Later he found it more economical and more efficient to collect several work-people under one roof, whether in his own house or barn, or some large shed in the village. He would supply them with their tools and materials, and would pay them wages. This was not common in the eighteenth century, but it was a growing practice, and it was the beginning of the capitalist factory system.



Old East India House (1726-96).

We have spoken of the two classes of men who saved money and used it to build up a business—the merchants or traders, and the manufacturers. In the eighteenth century the first class was the more important, in the nineteenth century the second. Up to the time of the revolution of 1688 the most prosperous and important people in England were the landowners. They were the only people who really counted in politics and the higher classes of society. But after the revolution, and during the century that followed, the influence of the landowners began to give way before that of the merchants and commercial classes, who were strongly supported by the Whigs. As Swift said at the time, "The power which used to follow land has gone over to money."

At the end of the seventeenth century the East India Company was reorganized, and began to build up a huge market for English goods in India and China. Immense fortunes were made not only by the East India merchants but by English merchants selling English cloth in the cities of the Mediterranean. London was fast becoming the centre of the world's trade. It was a place where goods were sold and exchanged rather than manufactured. The three main bodies of eighteenth-century Londoners, it has been said, were, firstly, a rowdy collection of "Cockney roughs," porters, dockers, watermen, and so on, who were employed round the port; secondly, a middle class of shopkeepers and craftsmen; and thirdly, a body of wealthy merchants and financiers who inhabited what was known as the "City" of London round about St. Paul's Cathedral and the Royal Exchange.

This merchant class, which was being made richer and more numerous by England's growing trade, was very much encouraged by the Government. In 1693 the National Debt was established, and in 1694 the Bank of England was founded. The establishment of these two institutions meant that the Government was able to borrow from its wealthy citizens the money it needed, and in exchange was able to lend its support to the Bank of England * in advancing money to business men who wanted to extend their business. There was a strong alliance between the Government and the City merchants.

The eighteenth century was certainly the heyday of the merchant. You will find him—a prosperous, red-faced, well-fed figure—in many of the novels of that time. Dr. Johnson felt very patronizing when he said that “an English merchant was a new species of gentleman,” but he meant that he was becoming the rival of the landed gentleman in politics and social life.

Now the coming of the Industrial Revolution increased the wealth of the commercial classes ten-fold, and it also gave rise to a new class of men—the men whom we sometimes call “captains of industry.” By the end of the eighteenth century machines were invented, and steam-power to drive them was in use. What was urgently wanted was capital—money to build factories, to buy machinery, to stock materials, and to pay workers. Anybody who had capital and

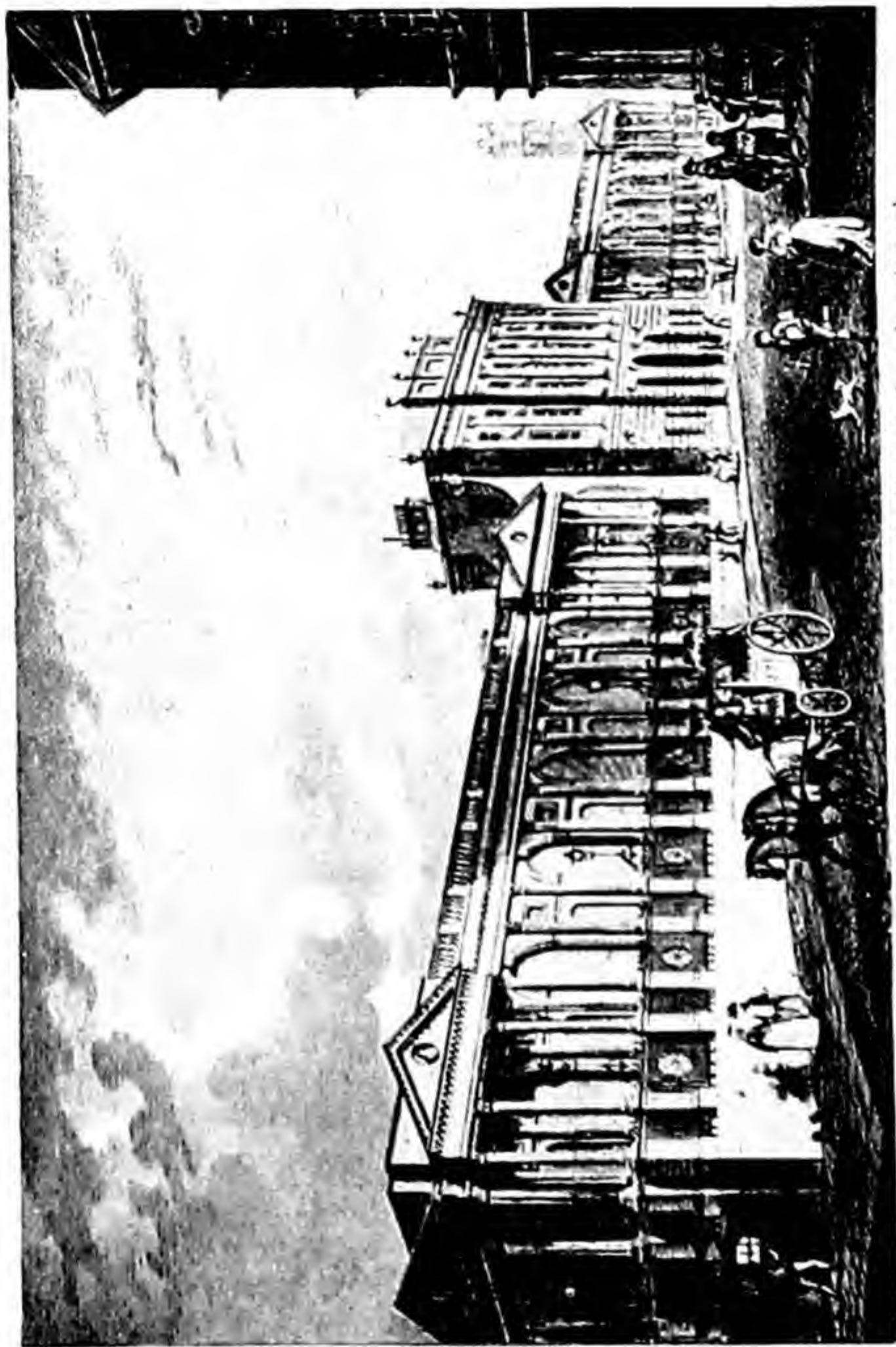
* The promoters of the scheme for establishing the bank subscribed a capital of £1,200,000, the whole of which was to be advanced to the Government at 8 per cent., plus £4,000 per annum for expenses. The bank was given the privilege (in the first instance for twelve years) of dealing in bills of exchange and bullion, and of issuing notes to an amount equal to its capital.

a little common sense could start as a manufacturer. It was a golden opportunity for men with a sense of adventure and ambition.

So it happened that at the close of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century capitalist manufacturers grew in numbers, until they were far more numerous and powerful than the merchants of the eighteenth century. In the woollen trade, indeed, it was often the old cloth merchants who saw their chance and put their money into the new spinning and weaving factories. In the cotton trade, which only became a large and important trade after steam-power was introduced, there was more opportunity for new men, and it was very often the yeomen farmers and country craftsmen, even apprentices, who saved money and put their savings into the building and running of a cotton mill. Robert Owen, about whom we shall read later, was apprenticed to a retail shopkeeper, and later set up as a millowner with £100 borrowed from his brother; and he was only one of many.

Three things made easy this great growth of capitalist enterprise. Firstly, there was a great deal of wealth in the country. Fortunes had been made in the colonial and Indian trade, and huge profits had been earned in selling tobacco, sugar, and spices. There was plenty of money ready to develop coal mines and ironworks and cotton mills—plenty to finance the inventors and to help those who were making new experiments.

Secondly, the growth of banks and banking made it much easier for people to borrow money and obtain credit. The Industrial Revolution acted as a spur to banking, because money on loan was so badly needed.



A view of the Bank of England, Threadneedle Street, London (1797).
(From a contemporary print in the Grace Collection, British Museum.)

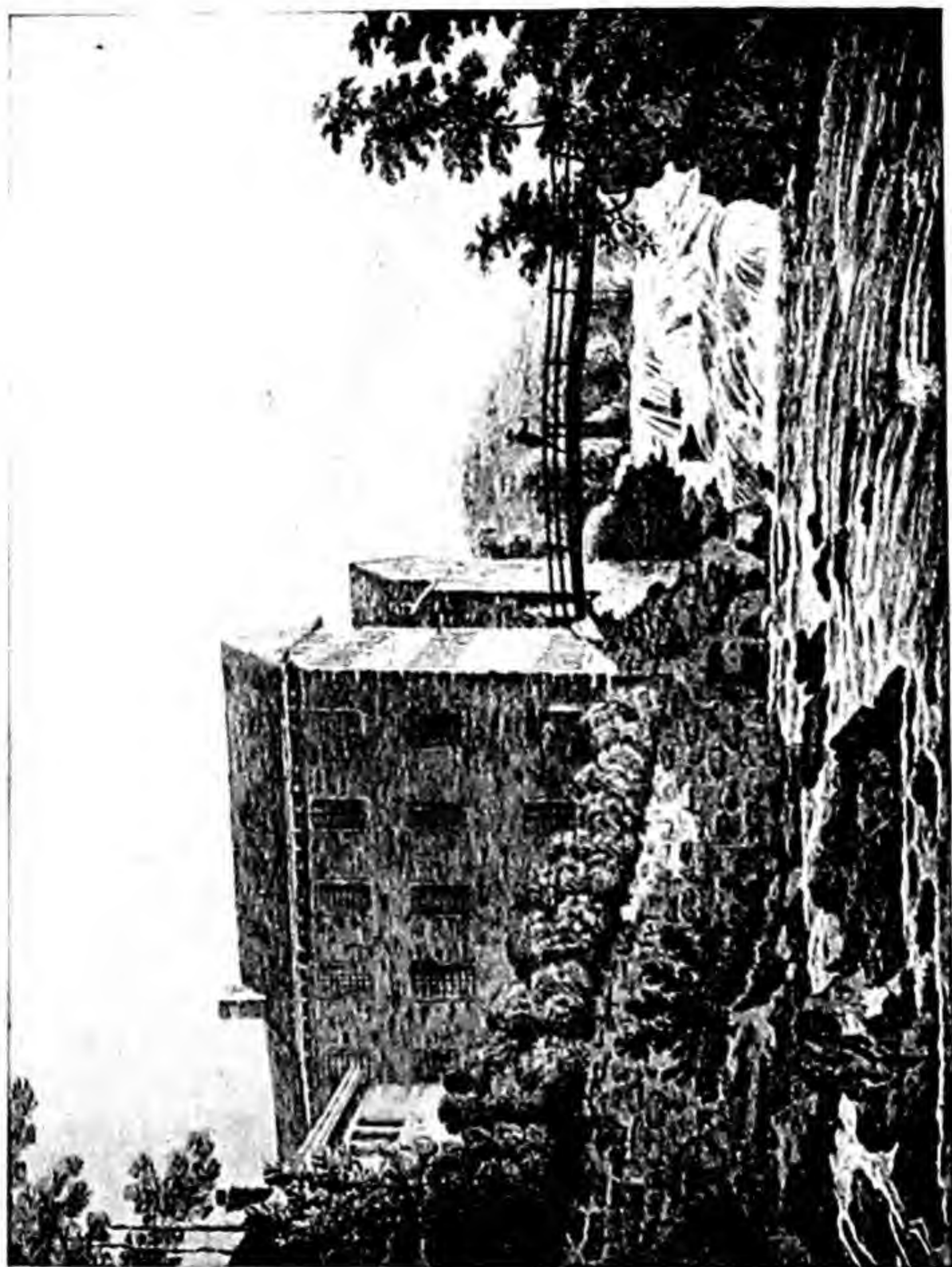
So great was the need that even small tradesmen turned bankers and issued notes. In 1750 there were not twelve banks outside London ; in 1793 there were nearly 400.

Thirdly, the fact that England was on the whole at peace in Europe from 1763 to 1793 gave her a great sense of security. Until the outbreak of the French war she felt very safe, especially when compared with France at the time of the French Revolution, and people did not mind risking their money to develop trade. In 1750 the mass of people in the North and Midlands were working either on their own account or for many small masters. In 1830 they were working for a few large masters.

Let us look at the type of capitalist employer and the type of factory worker at the opening of the nineteenth century.

The manufacturer or millowner had usually saved carefully or borrowed the money to start himself in business. He was very often a hard-headed, uneducated working man, with nothing to recommend him but ambition and pluck. He was thrifty and respectable, spending money on the business rather than on pleasure. He was content to work like a slave, and, unfortunately, to live like a slave-driver, for very few of these newly-made masters cared anything about the welfare of the workers. But their sons were not quite of the same sort, and by 1830 most of the employers had been, so to speak, born employers, without having "gone through the mill" themselves. This meant, of course, that they became more and more widely separated from their workmen.

The factory worker was of many types. He might



A Lancashire cotton factory worked by water-power (1794).
(J. Aikin : *Description of the Country round Manchester*, 1795.)

have been originally a farm worker, or a craftsman, or an Irish peasant. His whole life and outlook was vastly changed when he went to work in a factory. Gone was the old system of master, journeyman, and apprentice. Gone was the life which combined trade with work in the fields when it was needed. We can describe the condition of the new wage-earners simply by saying that when they wanted potatoes they did not plant and dig their own, but they made screws or wove cotton in order to earn the money to buy potatoes.

What the conditions in these factories were like we shall learn in a later chapter. We must remember here that a system gradually grew up whereby one man owned capital and paid wages to others. The man who owned the capital was usually the man who managed the mill and employed the workers. Later on, as the millowners grew richer and richer, and trade prospered even more, the capital needed to start and develop an industry was more than one man could supply. This led, as we shall see, to the establishment of a system of shareholders and companies. But at the beginning of the last century industry was still very simply organized. On the one hand was the capitalist employer, on the other hand the wage-earning worker. The period just after the Industrial Revolution was one of great distress for the workers, and yet for the employers it was one of great prosperity. They grew richer as their workers grew poorer, and the gulf between them became gradually deeper.

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PART III.—THE CENTURY BEHIND US
(1815-1914)

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I.—“LAISSEZ FAIRE,” OR “LEAVE IT ALONE!” (1815-67)

CHAPTER 6.—BRITAIN AFTER WATERLOO (1815-30)

Britain during the French wars—The aftermath of war—The Corn Laws—Policy of “laissez faire”—Development of trade

“ And that slaughter to the nation
Shall steam up like inspiration,
Eloquent, oracular,
A volcano heard afar.”

SHELLEY : *Masque of Anarchy* (written
after Peterloo, 1819).

WHEN the nineteenth century opened Britain was waging one of the greatest wars in her history—the war against France and Napoleon. Our task is not to follow the course of this war, but to find out how it affected the lives of the people. We who are living in the years following the two World Wars have learnt that war, even to those who are victorious, leaves behind it a terrible trail of unemployment and consequent misery and poverty. The people who lived after the Napoleonic wars found this out too, for the years from 1815 to 1830 were probably the blackest in all British history.

During the war, which lasted for more than twenty

years, Britain more than doubled her industry and her trade. There were two reasons for this increase—



Recruits.

(Caricature by W. H. Bunbury, 1780.)

there was a great demand for goods, and Britain was supreme on the seas.

Clothing made of woollen and cotton materials, arms, and iron goods of many kinds were wanted not only by the army but also by Britain's allies. The

new factories were kept constantly busy, and by employing women and children very cheaply the employers were able to make large fortunes and do a vast trade, in spite of the fact that they were heavily taxed.

But all this would have been of little use if Britain had lost her sea-power. It was because she beat the French at sea early in the struggle, and was able to seize the carrying trade of the world, that she could open up new markets in North and South America and the East, and sell her goods all over the world. In 1793, even when the war was going on, her export trade was £17,000,000; by 1815 it had risen to £58,000,000.

Britain had only one fear, and that was that she might not be able to grow enough corn to feed her increasing population. This fear led farmers to cultivate much land that was not at all suitable, in the hope of becoming very rich. It was in the days before Canada and Australia had been developed, and Britain depended very much on her own supply of food. The result was that bad harvests meant not only very high prices, but also that there was not enough corn to go round, and the people were actually in want.

Although Napoleon did his best to stop Europe from trading with Britain, and very nearly succeeded, the latter was able, by blockading the ports of Europe, to do more damage than she received. At the end of the war she was victorious on land and supreme on the sea, her trade was world-wide, and her factories, which, owing to her insular position, had been safe from the ravages of war, were working full time.

In 1815 peace came. Britain was strong at sea, and, as a nation, very rich. She had won new posses-

sions—Malta and Cape Colony being the chief—and she now traded with her lost American colonies as though they had never been at war with her.

But there was another side to the shield, and when all the excitement and activity of the war had died down, it was this other side which was most clearly seen. There was a huge public debt ; taxation on a scale which meant that almost half the income of the nation went to the Government ; terrible poverty and distress among the factory and agricultural workers ; overcrowding and low wages ; and no steps were taken to put matters right. The years from 1815 to 1822 were years when "everything was done wrong." Let us see what were the reasons for this state of affairs.

In the first place, the years of war were also the years when the Industrial Revolution was moving at its greatest pace. Factories were springing up everywhere, machinery was being used instead of the human hand, and women and children were employed to look after the machinery instead of men. In 1803 there were 2,400 power-looms in use ; in 1820 there were over 14,000. This had meant great hardship for hundreds of hand-weavers who had lost their trade, and long hours of work in stuffy factories for their wives and children. It was little wonder that men hated the machines which took away their work and gave it to the women and children because their labour was so cheap.

In the second place, the price of food was rising steadily, while wages sank lower and lower. Here again we can realize this most clearly by a concrete example. In 1802 a weaver earned about 13s. 10d. a week, while the price of wheat was 67s. a quarter ;

in 1817 he was only able to earn 4s. 3d. a week, and wheat had risen to 94s. a quarter. Therefore he was able to buy much less bread after the war was over.

The high price of corn, which caused such misery to the poor at this time, was due to three things—bad harvests in many successive years, the great increase in the number of people to be fed, and the operation of the Corn Laws.

The Corn Laws were of the first importance at the beginning of the nineteenth century. If you had been living at that time, you would have heard almost everybody discussing them. People preached and lectured about them, and wrote and even fought about them, because they made such a difference to the amount of bread they could buy. Parliament was still almost entirely composed of landowners—the people who had ruled England for centuries, and whose interests were all in their country estates and farms. They believed that the prosperity of England depended entirely on the prosperity of the landed gentry. The landowners wanted good rents for their land, and the farmers a good price for their corn. For over a century there had been Corn Laws designed to stop cheap foreign corn from coming into the country, but in 1815 a new Corn Law was passed which said that it should not enter unless the price of English wheat was 80s. a quarter or more. This law was meant to encourage the farmers to grow as much corn as possible at a high price, but it made bread very dear, and many working-class families were almost starving. While bread was 1s. 6d. a quartern loaf, many labourers were only earning 9s. a week.

The third reason for the great distress after the

war was the stopping of the war itself. Peace came suddenly, and neither the Government nor anybody else had done anything to make the change from war to peace an easy one. This is how matters stood.

During the war the Government had bought huge supplies of food and clothing, and arms and other things for the army, from the farmers and manufacturers. When the war stopped, these enormous orders stopped too, and the factories stopped, and many thousands of men were thrown out of work because there was no longer a great army to feed and clothe. At the same time part of the army was disbanded, and many men were suddenly "thrown on the labour market"—that is to say, all these returned soldiers wanted jobs, and they found it very difficult to get them. Then the manufacturers also found that Britain's allies in Europe no longer wanted soldiers' clothing and arms from us. They were very exhausted and poor after the war, and they could not afford to buy many of our goods. They found it cheaper to make their own things, and had to employ their own ex-soldiers. So there were still fewer orders for the factories. The price of iron, for instance, dropped from £20 to £8 a ton, and 7,000 ironworkers were out of work. The blast furnaces were shut down, which meant less work for the miners who supplied them with coal.

You can imagine what confusion there must have been in the few years following Waterloo (1815): prices rising, wages falling, taxes on nearly everything, too little food, factories closed, and thousands out of work and destitute.

We must now try to discover what the workers

were really feeling and thinking in these very distressing days, and what was the attitude of the Government and the employers towards them. We must remember that the working classes had, until very recently, been peasants working on the land. They had not had time to get used to the new life in towns and factories, and they looked back to the days of the eighteenth century when they lived in the villages and grew their own food, and had plenty of work. Looking backward like this made them feel very bitter and angry with the people who were using machines which very often threw men out of work. Machinery has, in the end, meant a great saving of labour and time, and a great increase in comfort for everybody. But at that time factories were not at all pleasant places, hours were very long, and, as we have seen, the women and children had to do the work because they took lower wages, while the men were often forced to be idle. It was small wonder that some of the workmen tried to burn and wreck the machinery. There were a great many strikes and riots of this kind. The most serious of these were called the Luddite riots, after a boy named Ned Lud, who broke two stocking frames in a fit of rage. In 1811 some of the Luddites, as they were called, gathered together by night, with blackened faces, broke into houses and factories, and smashed every machine and knitting frame they could find. In the following year sixteen Luddites were hanged.

1816 was another very bad year. The harvest was bad, and the farmers held on to their corn, hoping for a very high price. The peasants and country labourers turned Luddite, and in many country districts the

sky was red with burning ricks. The rioters even set fire to farm buildings and farmhouses, and smashed the threshing machines which had taken work from them. In the towns that year many bands of workers marched through the streets carrying banners inscribed, "Bread or Blood."

Another thing which made the working people very bitter was the Corn Law which helped to make bread so dear, and food riots became very common. At one time there was an outbreak of cholera, and the Government ordered a fast as the only means of getting rid of the disease. But the working men formed a procession in the London streets, carrying a loaf of bread and a round of beef labelled, "The True Cure for Cholera."

We shall read in the next chapter about the men who tried to help their fellows to escape from this misery. One of the reasons why escape was so difficult was that the workers had few to represent them in Parliament, which consisted mostly of country gentlemen; and this fact made them feel that the only way to draw attention to their grievances was by disorder and rioting.

By 1819 there was a strong demand for the reform of Parliament, and a great many meetings were held in support of this movement. Unfortunately one of these meetings, held in 1819, had a tragic ending. About 60,000 men, women, and children collected in St. Peter's Fields, Manchester, to demand votes for everybody, and when the magistrates got alarmed and sent mounted soldiers to arrest the chief speaker, the soldiers charged the crowd, with the result that eleven people were killed and many hundreds wounded.

The Government approved of the action of the magistrates, and thus infuriated the people, who began to talk about the "Massacre of Peterloo," saying that the "battle of St. Peter's Fields" was as important as that of Waterloo.

The year 1819 was in many ways the worst in the history of this period. After Peterloo things began to improve a little, and the workers themselves worked earnestly for reform. Before we trace the beginnings of this movement we must look at the attitude of the governing classes during and after the war.

With a very few exceptions the men who governed England during the time of the Industrial Revolution and the French war were very much afraid that the ideas of the French revolutionaries might take root in England, and that the English working classes might also rise against their rulers. This fear often made the Government very nervous and harsh. Until 1822 Parliament was almost always hostile to the workers. They showed this hostility in two important ways. Firstly, they passed in 1799 and 1800 what were known as the Combination Acts—laws which forbade workmen to join Trade-Unions and to form societies for improving their position—so that the workers could not join together to ask for higher wages, or shorter hours, or better conditions, and were helpless in face of their employers. Secondly, in 1819, after Peterloo, the Government passed what were known as the Six Acts, which were meant to try and keep order by the exercise of great severity. These Acts prevented unauthorized drilling and the holding of large public meetings, put a stamp duty on newspapers and pamphlets so that

they could not be bought cheaply, and gave new powers to the magistrates for crushing any exhibitions of discontent.

There is no doubt that the governing classes were afraid of what the mass of the workers might do. But they had a second reason for refusing to do anything to help them. They had adopted the policy which



Adam Smith.

influenced Britain for about a hundred years, and which we call *laissez faire*. *Laissez faire*, which is French for "Leave it alone," was a watchword which had been given to the Government by teachers of political economy,* beginning with Adam Smith, who published his great book, *The Wealth of Nations*, in 1776. These economists had the idea that the best way to get trade to flourish was for the farmers and manufacturers to be left alone. They

must be able to sell their goods where they liked, and pay what wages they liked to their workers. If they were not interfered with in any way trade would develop freely, and Britain would grow rich. This system, if carried to its extreme extent, would, of course, mean that there must be no factory laws, no regulation of wages, no shortening of hours of work.

* Political economy is the science which deals with the making and distributing of wealth. Adam Smith is sometimes called the "Father of Political Economy."

Now, from the time of Queen Elizabeth to the beginning of the nineteenth century, all trade and industry had been very carefully looked after by the State, which had made laws to regulate it. There were laws about the rate of wages, about apprenticeship and the way trade must be carried on, and laws about the shipping of goods and the conduct of trade with other countries. In the early nineteenth century nearly all this control was swept away, and under the system of "Let it alone" the factory owners could do much as they liked.

In one way it was a very good thing to sweep away the obstacles to trade. But when the system of *laissez faire* first started it worked very unfairly. The employers were left quite free to carry on business as they liked, but the workers were not free at all. The Combination Laws prevented them from forming Unions, and the Six Acts prevented them from holding meetings and buying cheap newspapers. We shall see in the next chapter how a man called Francis Place persuaded the people in control that the regulations which hindered the workers must also be swept away. Another law which hampered freedom of trade was, of course, the Corn Law, and until this was abolished, *laissez faire* was not really complete.

This system of *laissez faire* was, on the whole, the policy of the Government for more than half the century. It gradually broke down because people began to realize that it was just as important to care for the happiness and comfort of the people as to increase the trade of the country. But in the first half of the nineteenth century the Government was often inclined to sit still and do nothing until it was

forced to act. Few talked or cared about "social reform," and most country gentlemen in Parliament would have been horrified at the idea of spending public money on schools and playgrounds, and public baths and factory inspectors.

Another idea which the Government learned from some of the economists was that it was quite useless to raise wages, because if you did there would not be enough money to go round. This idea, that there was only a limited amount of money to be spent in wages, was called the "Wages Fund Theory." It was a great blow for the workers to be told by learned men—quite wrongly—that it was hopeless for them to try and get permanently higher wages or better conditions.



An old-time watchman or "Charlie," the predecessor of the "Peeler."

The result of all these ideas was that things had been allowed to drift, and the Government believed that there was no cure for poverty, and nothing more could be done.

The first signs of improvement came in 1822, when three statesmen began to think of reforms—Canning, Peel, and Huskisson. They were sometimes called "Liberal Tories," and they did honestly believe that something must be done to relieve distress.

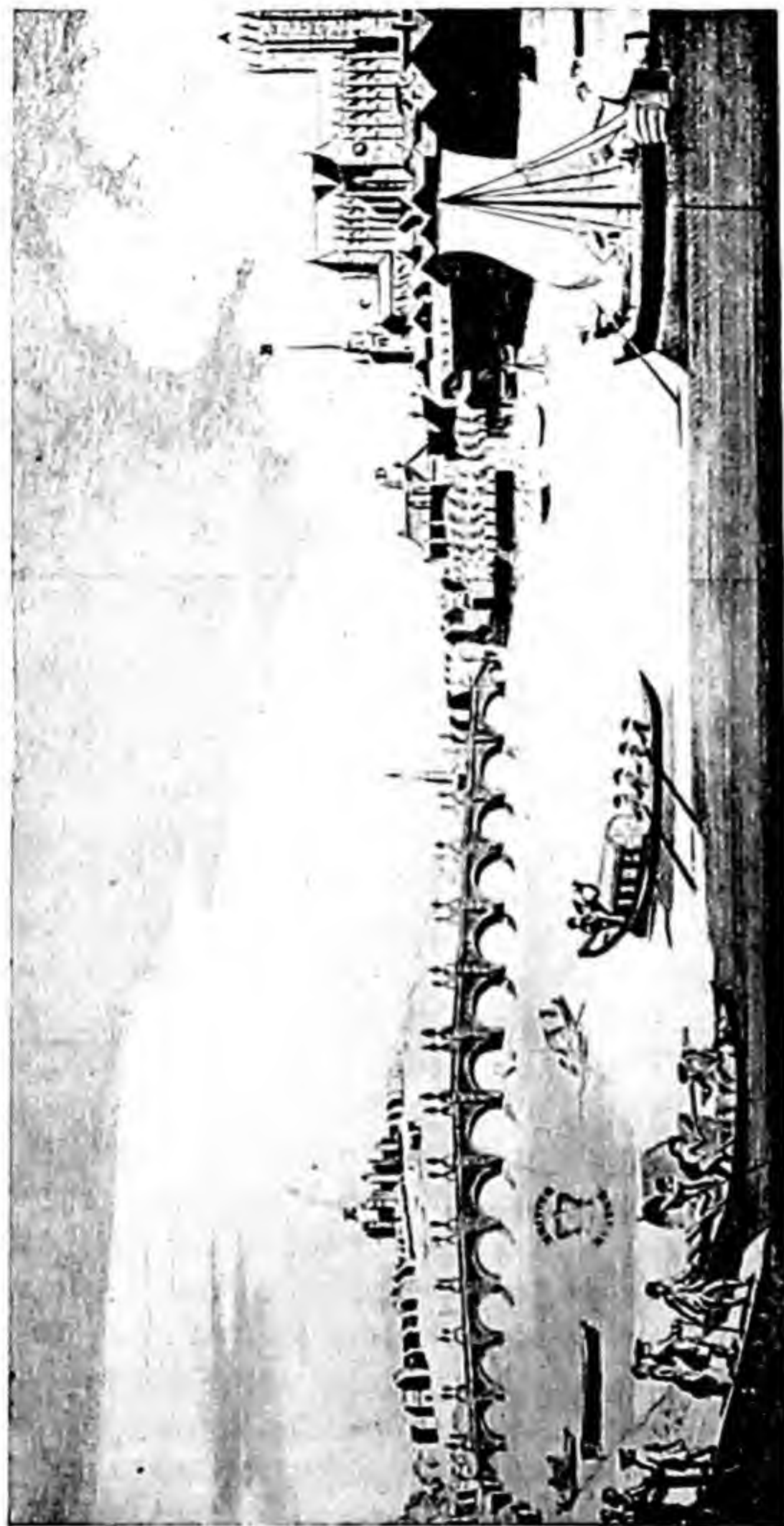
Canning was very broad-minded in his foreign policy. Peel set about reforming the laws. Most of the Six Acts, as well as the Combination Laws, were repealed. At that time there were over two hundred crimes for which the punishment might be death.

Some of these were hardly crimes at all—for instance, interfering with the source of a fish pond, injuring Westminster Bridge, or impersonating pensioners of Greenwich Hospital. Peel abolished over one hundred of these offences. He also organized the first police force, the members of which were called “Peelers” after him. This was a great reform, for the police became very efficient, providing much greater safety for the people, and in the case of disturbances order was now kept, not by armed soldiers, but by a non-military force whose only weapon was a baton. They were much more effective than the soldiers had been, because they gradually earned the trust of the people.

Huskisson carried out reforms in finance and trade. He abolished many of the very high duties, and tried to make the taxes as moderate as he could. He also gave preference to colonial goods, and is therefore sometimes considered to be the founder of the movement for Empire Free Trade.

Just at this time, too, trade began to revive, and there was a series of good harvests. Although the distress among the workers lasted until much later, the “twenties” certainly saw the end of the worst period.

The troubles of this time were not entirely due to the Government or to the employers. Instead of making their living by agriculture and by manufacturing their own supplies of goods, most of the people were now making their living by trade. Trade is not a steady thing. It is very uncertain and very changeable. There are bad years and good years—uncertain markets and changing prices. All these affected the working classes greatly. The manufacturers were only beginning to learn where and how to sell their goods.



The first Westminster Bridge, opened in 1750.

(Half of the cost was raised by lotteries.)

- A. Westminster Abbey.
- B. St. Margaret's Church.
- C. Westminster Hall.
- D. House of Lords.
- E. Palace of the Archbishop of Canterbury (Lambeth).

"Now that this bridge is finished, there is not perhaps another in the whole world that can be compared to it. . . . A guard, consisting of twelve watchmen, is appointed for the security of the passage over this bridge. The recesses over each pier might have otherwise served for places of ambush for robbers and cut-throats."

(*Universal Magazine*, 1750.)

We even read of their sending shiploads of skates to Brazil, where there was no ice, and sometimes their merchandise rotted before it was sold. While the manufacturers were finding their markets, and working out a good system of booking orders and delivering goods, the workers suffered from unemployment. Few industries



George Canning.

were now able to stand alone ; nearly all depended upon each other. If the skate manufacturer closed his works, several steel workers would be thrown out of employment, and so on through the whole of industry.

Britain, after Waterloo, was becoming a great commercial power ; but it was not an easy journey, and there were a great many bankrupt employers as well as starving workers before the end was reached.

CHAPTER 7.—PIONEERS (1800-40)

Pioneers in poetry and science—Cobbett and the Reform Act—
Place and the repeal of the Combination Acts—Owen and
factory reform

“I will not cease from mental fight,
Nor shall my sword sleep in my hand,
Till we have built Jerusalem
In England's green and pleasant land.”
WILLIAM BLAKE: *Jerusalem* (1804).

AT each period in our history there have lived men and women who were pioneers. They were brave people who often had to suffer ridicule and even persecution, but who spent their lives in clearing the track, and laying down roads for the next generation to travel. One of the chief glories of the nineteenth century is that it was so rich in men and women of this kind. Except in art, science, and literature, the eighteenth century was rather slow-moving; but at the beginning of the nineteenth century the material changes in England seemed to make a great change in men's minds, and they became keen and adventurous, and eager to try out new ideas. This was especially the case in poetry, for we have in this period the great names of Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Shelley, and Keats. Science was also forging ahead, and this period produced Sir Humphry Davy and Dalton in chemistry, Faraday in electricity, Herschel in astron-

omy, and many others. All these men were living at the beginning of the century.

In this chapter we shall review the work of one or two men who were pioneers in another field of activity.



Sir Humphry Davy.

Instead of having genius for some particular form of art or literature, they were just men of sound common sense and great energy, and above all, full of love for their fellow-men. They were reformers in the best sense of the word, for they saw how miserable large

numbers of the people were, and they spent their lives in trying to make things better. The names of these men are not as well known as they should be, for they not only worked hard and bravely, but they were very successful. Cobbett's work did much to bring about the reform of Parliament; Francis Place, although he did not know it, was the pioneer of Trade-Unionism, because he managed to get the Combination Laws repealed; Robert Owen was the pioneer of Factory Laws and of the Co-operative movement.



Davy
safety
lamp.

These three men had neither high birth nor wealth to help them. One was a farmer's boy, one a tailor, and one a draper's assistant. Let us see what work each man did for his country.

We have already mentioned William Cobbett (1762-1835) in the chapter on the revolution in agriculture. Cobbett was a farmer's son who ran away to London and served in an attorney's office, but soon afterwards he enlisted as a soldier and was sent to America. He had already started reading widely, and writing down his thoughts on men and things. Cobbett grew up to be rather like John Bull to look at, and was very like the typical John Bull in character. He was always quite certain that he was right, and that those who disagreed with him were very, very stupid. Having left the army in 1791, he spent some time in France and again in America, but came back to England in 1800. Although he was at first a Tory in politics, he soon became a strong Radical—that is to say, he came to believe that politics in Parliament needed very drastic reform. In 1802 he started a

weekly paper, called the *Political Register*, which was continued almost without interruption until his death, and in this journal he attacked his enemies and aired his views about the reform of Parliament, agriculture, and finance. The *Register* at first cost a shilling, but after some time a separate cheap number was issued at 2d., without news,* and it began to be very widely read, especially by the skilled workmen. We are told that the one thought of the factory workers, as they poured from the mills on the day of publication, was whether Cobbett's *Register* had come by the latest coach.

Cobbett never encouraged violence, but he fought hard against corruption in politics and the tyranny of some of the employers of labour. He wrote vigorously, in plain, direct English, and not only sold his paper everywhere, but travelled about himself, calling meetings and finding out what the workers were really thinking. "With what indignation," he wrote, "must you hear yourselves called the Populace, the Rabble, the Mob, and the Swinish Multitude." The people enjoyed reading and hearing Cobbett, and he was so eager about all his remedies that he made hundreds of others equally eager to do something to better their position.

Cobbett is described as an "elderly and respectable-looking, red-faced gentleman, in a dust-coloured coat and drab breeches with gaiters, tall and straightly built, with sharp eyes, and a round and ruddy countenance." This was in 1833, when he became a

* Thus escaping the Newspaper Tax of 6d., which was not done away with until 1855. In the early years of Queen Victoria's reign a Manchester newspaper proprietor sold a straw for a penny, and gave his paper away. He was imprisoned for defrauding the revenue.

member of Parliament. When he died in 1835 a wit said that he had become a habit—"a dose of strong drink which all of us had been taking for years." He was often very obstinate, and he wrote so violently that he was more than once prosecuted for libel, and even imprisoned; but Cobbett's heart was a very sound one. He cared for England, for the country-



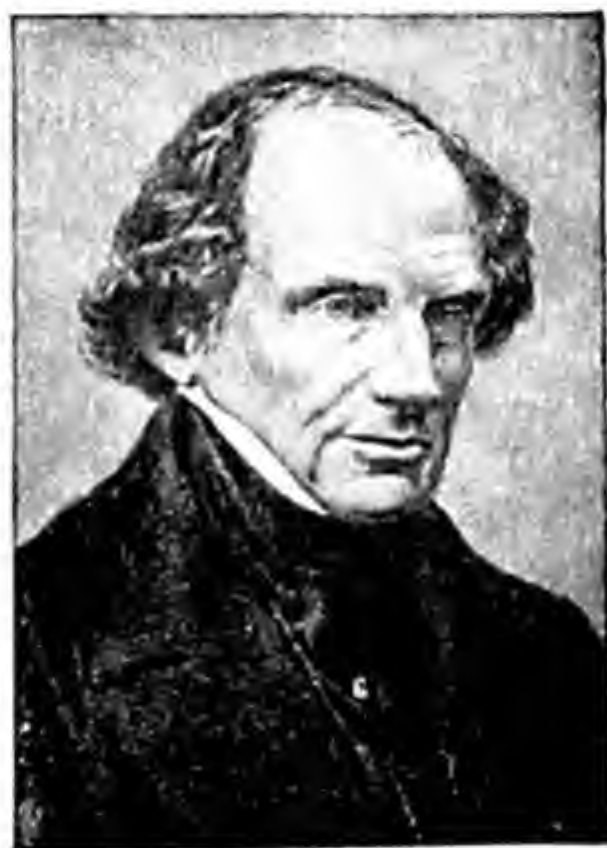
Old Sarum (about the time of the first Reform Bill).

side and the happiness of the people, and as he rode sturdily along on horseback, looking keenly at the land and the cottages and the labourers, he called loudly for radical (or "root") reform of the Parliament which could allow such misery to exist.

The Reform Act, for which Cobbett was so anxious, was passed in 1832, three years before his death. After all the riots and machine breaking of 1816 and

the following years, the workers, urged on by Cobbett and other leaders, began to press for a better Parliament. We have seen how Parliament was still composed almost entirely of landlords and country squires. Only a small proportion of the people of the country had votes, so that it was very important to "extend the franchise." Not only so, but it was so long since seats in Parliament had been allotted that many places which sent one or two members had decayed to almost nothing, while others which had sprung up and grown into large towns had no member at all. The famous "borough" of Old Sarum had no house and no inhabitants, but sent two members to Parliament, while big towns in the Midlands and the North—like Birmingham, Sheffield, Leeds, and Manchester—had no members.

Seats were bought and sold quite openly. The big landowners told their tenants how to vote, and sometimes gave or sold the seats which they owned to candidates who voted in Parliament at their bidding. Such boroughs were called "pocket boroughs." Most electors would probably be willing to sell their votes, and it usually cost a man at least £5,000 to win a seat in Parliament.



Lord John Russell.

In the nineteenth century the demand for reform became gradually louder, and in 1831 a Bill was introduced by Lord John Russell which took seats



The polling-booth: voters taking the oath.

The main figure is that of an old pensioner. The law required every voter to make an affidavit of identity, and in doing so to place his right hand on the Testament; but the soldier has only a stump, and the attorney for the other side is strongly objecting to the oath, as it is not being taken in the legal form.

(From an engraving after the painting by Hogarth.)

from the tiny "rotten boroughs" and gave them to the big new towns, and also widened the electorate. It passed the second reading by one vote, but was wrecked in Committee. Then the Reformers grew stronger, and a second Bill was passed by over a hundred votes, but it was thrown out by the Lords. When the people saw that the cause of reform was in danger of being lost they went mad with fury. They burned down houses, broke open Derby Jail, and started the terrible Bristol riots. One cry rang through the country: "The Bill, the whole Bill, and nothing but the Bill." At last, in 1832, the Reform Bill became law, but it was not at all the Bill for which the people had been clamouring for so long. It gave a vote to householders in towns whose houses were rented at £10 or more a year, and to those in the country whose holdings were rented at £50 or over. It also took away 143 seats from certain boroughs and gave them to the counties or large towns, as well as 65 additional seats.

The Reform Act of 1832 did not give votes to the working classes, but only to the prosperous middle classes. It was a great disappointment. Some one has described the working classes as hammering at a door which at last burst open, only to let their employers in while they were kept outside. That is, in fact, what happened.

But the Act did, all the same, entirely change the character of Parliament, because, under the new Act, a great many business men and manufacturers from the North were elected, whose ideas and interests were quite new and different from those of the landowners. This soon became clear when they began to demand the abolition of the Corn Laws. Among these middle-

class business members of Parliament were many like Sir Robert Peel, Richard Cobden, and John Bright, who brought a new spirit into Parliament. Parliament



John Bright.

was no longer the club of a few wealthy families, but was much more an active part of the nation, and it felt that it had a great national duty to perform.

We now come to the second of our pioneers, Francis Place (1771-1854). Place was born in a

debtor's prison near Drury Lane. His father was a tavern keeper, and he had a miserable boyhood, being forced to mix with people of bad and dissolute life. When he was fourteen he was bound apprentice to a breeches-maker, and in due time became a journeyman tailor. At nineteen he married, and he and his wife lived in one room upon their joint earnings of about 17s. a week.

Place had a great deal of pluck and common sense. He and his wife went through some very hard times, for in organizing a strike in his trade Place lost all his savings, and had to pawn all his goods. They were "only half fed on bread and water, with an occasional red herring," but after a time, by working sixteen and eighteen hours a day respectively, they became fairly prosperous.

Place taught himself mathematics, and borrowed books on philosophy, law, history, and science. In 1799 he opened a tailor's shop at Charing Cross, and by being punctual, honest, and determined to succeed, he built up a prosperous business. Place was a very practical man. His troubles and his experience of a disastrous strike made him very anxious to help his fellow-workmen, and he thoroughly understood their difficulties. But when some of the dreamers came to him and said, "The people must be free," he would say, "Yes, but *how* shall we make them free?" He always wanted to turn dreams into action.

Place soon became much in demand for organizing workmen's clubs, and he made friends with many of the Radical politicians who were working for reform. He was very good at collecting facts and drawing up documents for the use of members of Parliament, and

his shop became a centre at which he wrote letters and articles, and interviewed employers and workmen. He felt very strongly that no steps could be taken by the workers to improve their position until they were free from the constraint of the laws which prevented



Francis Place.

(From a drawing by D. Maclise, R.A.)

them from joining together to try and raise their wages. This, then, was Place's main object—the repeal of the Combination Laws—and to gain this end he worked day and night, and made the friendly members of Parliament work equally hard.

In 1810 the *Times* newspaper prosecuted its printers for belonging to a Union and taking part in a strike. The magistrate, who called the strike a “wicked conspiracy,” sentenced the defendants to im-

prisonment, varying from nine months to two years. Feeling among the members of the unreformed House of Commons against the working classes was very strong, and Place had a difficult task. At last, in 1824, by hard work, interviewing workmen's delegates and drawing up very careful evidence, and by the help of an energetic Radical member named Joseph Hume, Place succeeded in getting the Combination Acts repealed.

This was a great triumph for a working tailor. But Place's work did not end there, for he also threw himself whole-heartedly into the struggle for Parliamentary reform ; and it was he who, when the Reform Bill was in danger, urged people who had investments to draw their gold out of the banks and so frighten the Government into giving way.

In 1837, when Victoria became queen, there was a great deal of distress, partly due to a bad harvest. Food was dear and wages were low, and in the following year Place helped to draw up what came to be known as the "People's Charter." This Charter set out six points embodying demands for Manhood Suffrage, or a vote for every man ; Equal Electoral Districts ; Vote by Ballot ; Annual Parliaments ; Abolition of the Property Test for Members of Parliament ; and Payment of Members.

Place was always law-abiding. He believed in getting things done quietly and by persuasion. He did not therefore have much to do with the Chartist movement, because some of its leading members advocated violence. To the end of his strenuous life he believed in his fellows and in the better times that were coming. "I saw," he wrote, "that to better the condition of others was a long, uphill piece of work ; that my best efforts would produce very little effect. But I saw very distinctly that I could do nothing better, nothing indeed half so good." Those are fine words from an old tailor whose life had been hard and whose reward seemed very small.

The "People's Charter" started the Chartist movement, which greatly excited the nation in the forties. The six points of the Charter seem to us

now very moderate indeed, and that fact alone shows how far we have travelled politically in the last hundred years. Annual Parliaments began to appear unnecessary when railways and better roads brought members into closer touch with their constituencies; but the other five points have practically been granted without any great commotion. But at the time when they were first made these demands of the Chartists seemed to some other people very dreadful. (See page 103.)

The working people flocked to sign the petitions which were sent to Parliament, because they felt crushed and miserable, and they saw that the Reformed Parliament had not yet been able to relieve their distress. Some of their leaders, the chief of whom was Feargus O'Connor—a hot-headed Irishman—encouraged rioting, and so made the whole movement very unpopular among orderly citizens. “The principle of the People’s Charter,” said one fiery preacher, “means that every workman has a right to have a good hat and coat, a good roof, a good dinner, no more work than will keep him in health, and as much wages as will keep him in plenty.” This was all very vague, and many of the Chartists did not really know at all what they were aiming at. They held huge torchlight meetings, and tried to arrange big strikes, but they were badly organized.

The year 1848 was a year of revolution in several European states, and in that year the Chartists made their last attempt by calling a mass meeting on Kennington Common and sending a huge petition to Parliament. But the meeting was not nearly so large as people had expected, and a great many signatures to the petition were afterwards found to be forged, so

TO THE WORKING CLASSES.

Fellow Workmen:-

Be wise in time. ABSTAIN FROM GIVING ANY ASSISTANCE TO THE CHARTIST MOVEMENT; be sure those who advise you otherwise are your worst, your bitterest enemies. Read these two statements of your **GAIN AND LOSS**, which of them depends upon your conduct now

LOSS.

If you side with these men, and **IF YOU SUCCEED** in overturning the government, you will succeed also in Closing our Factories, in Closing our Warehouses, in Closing our Shops. Having destroyed our Trade, you may next succeed in upsetting our National Credit, your next success will be by throwing thousands upon thousands of your fellow-men out of Employ, and, finally by bringing your Wives and your Children to Want, and your Country to Distress and Difficulty, from which she may never recover.

GAIN.

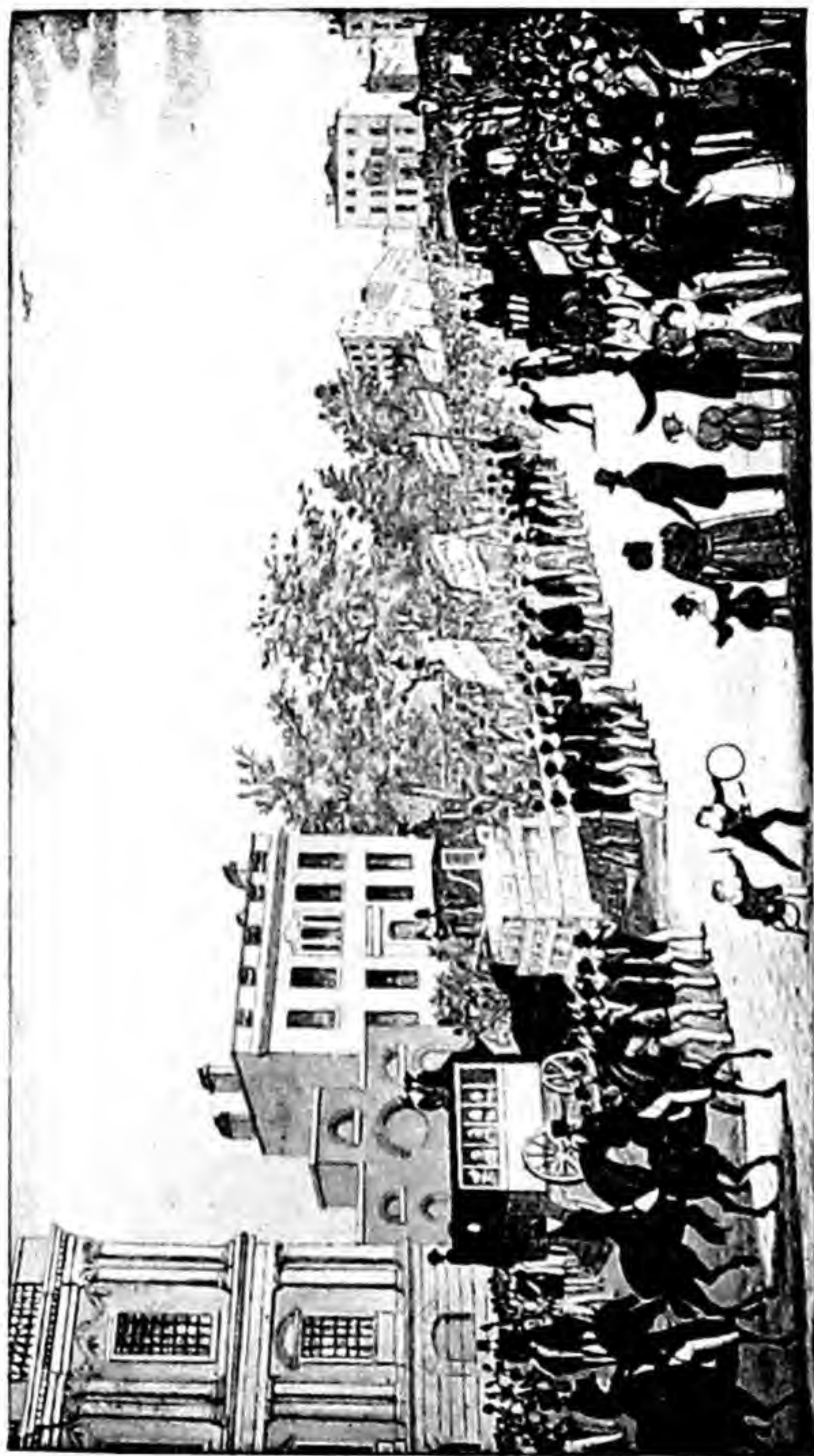
Be peaceable and quiet, and your advantage will soon be abundance and prosperity.

You know that the French Factories are most of them closed—there is no Trade and no Work—their produce is therefore not likely to compete with your labour. Germany, Austria, Prussia, Italy, all the Manufacturing Countries of Europe are similarly situated, and they cannot even produce necessaries for themselves. Already our Manufacturers have orders to supply these wants, and to meet this demand, **IF ORDER AND CREDIT** is maintained here, your labour will be wanted.

Besides this, it is calculated that many Millions of Pounds Sterling are spent every year by English Travellers abroad; be peaceful, be orderly, and this money, owing to the dreadful state of Europe, will be spent at home, and you will benefit by it.

Remember the Rich cannot suffer without the Middle Classes and the Men in Trade suffering too, and then comes your turn. But **GOD** knows the Poor cannot suffer long, alone.

Which of these two conditions will you go for? Decide at **ONCE AND ACT ACCORDINGLY**, but remember if riot is your choice, you will have to answer to the **LAW FOR IT**.

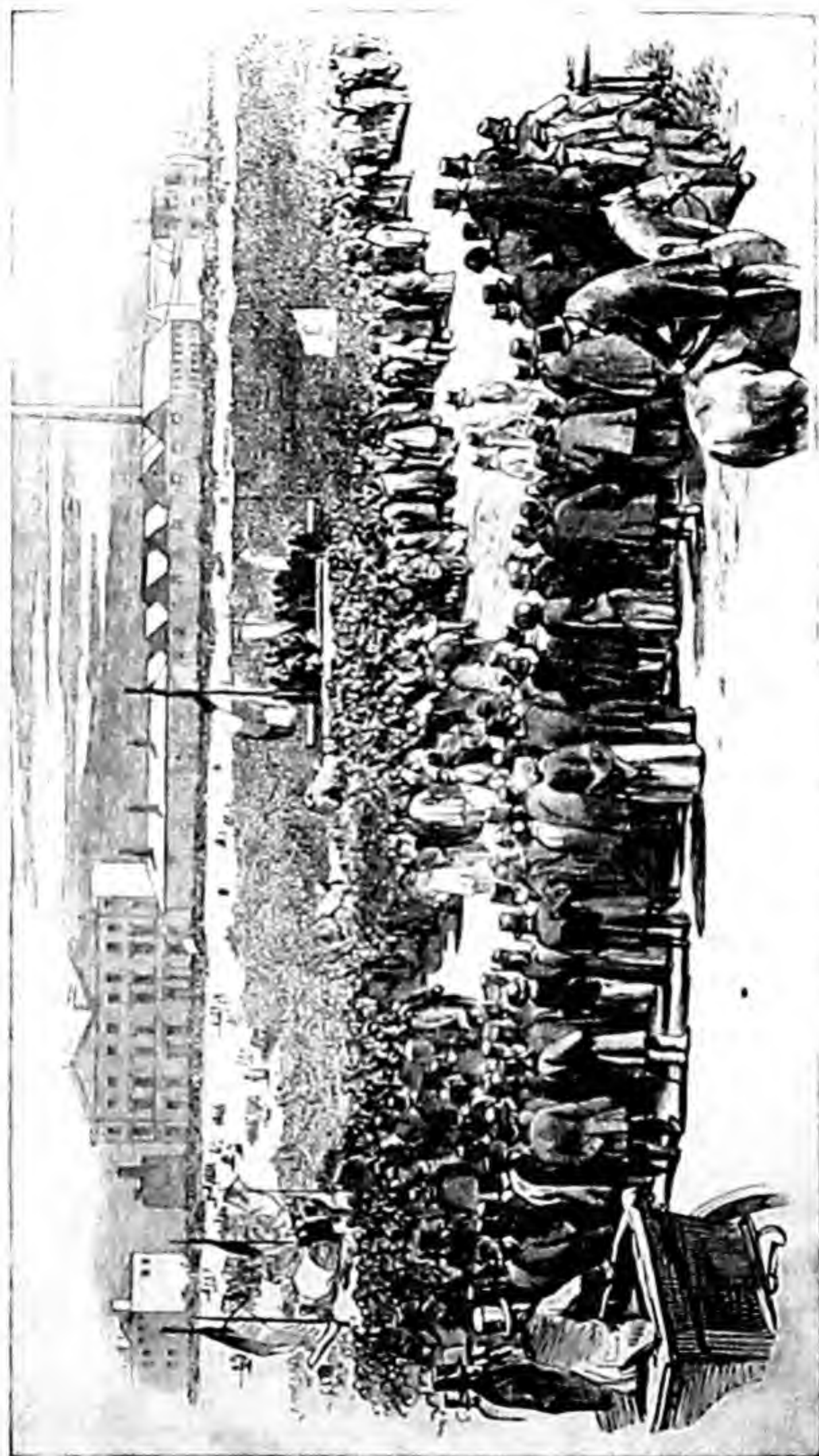


Procession attending the Great National Petition of 3,317,702 to the House of Commons, 1842
(From a contemporary print in the Grace Collection.)

the whole movement became the subject of ridicule. About this time trade and wages began to improve, and the workers turned to other methods of bettering their conditions.

The third pioneer whose story we must now read was Robert Owen (1771-1858). Owen was the son of a Welsh saddler, and when quite young went to London as assistant in a haberdasher's shop. With powdered and curled wig and a stiff pigtail, he served behind the counter, and afterwards obtained a similar situation in Manchester. When he was eighteen he first heard about the "new and curious machinery" beginning to be used in Manchester for spinning cotton. Owen was a young man of great courage and ambition, and, borrowing £100 from his brother, he and a partner started a workshop to make spinning machines. He did so well that he soon got a post as manager of a large spinning-mill in Manchester, and then as managing director of the Chorlton Twist Company. A few years later Owen married the daughter of a man named Dale, who was the owner of the New Lanark Mills on the river Clyde. In 1800 he found himself manager and part owner of these mills, with a free hand to run them as he thought best.

The taking over of the management of New Lanark Mills by Robert Owen is a very important event in nineteenth-century history, because Owen was the first man who really tried to make a factory a pleasant and comfortable place. There were no factory inspectors then, and only a very few regulations. We shall read in a later chapter about the condition of children in the factories. Owen found in his mills



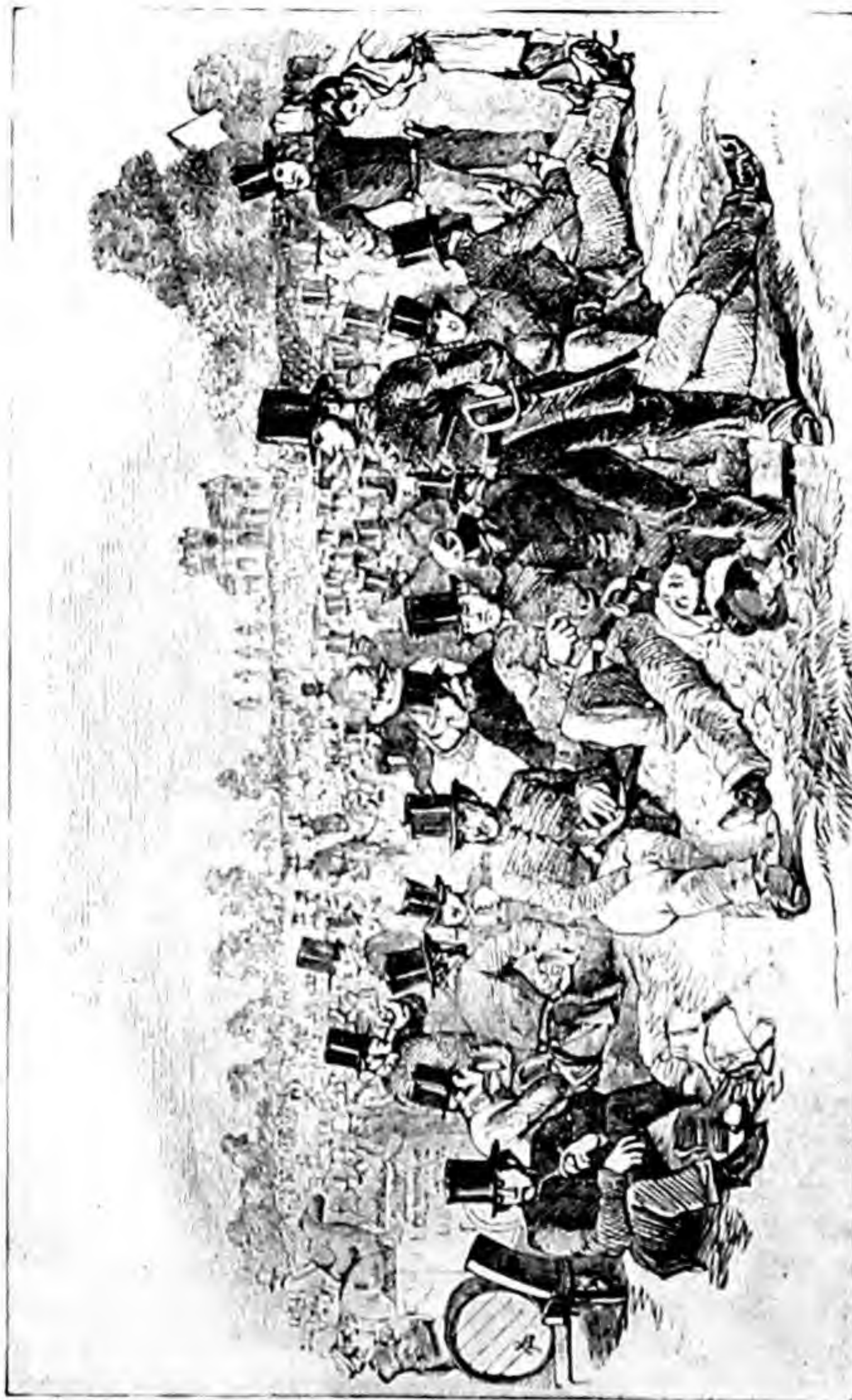
The meeting of Chartists on Kennington Common, April 10, 1848.
[*From a Daguerreotype, "one of the earliest photographs." (Illustrated London News, 1848.)*]

five hundred children, mostly from workhouses and between five and eight years old, and they were working thirteen hours a day. He at once refused to employ any child under ten, and reduced the hours at first to twelve, and later to ten hours or less per day.

Owen was a wise man as well as a kind one. When he first worked in a mill he noticed "the great attention given to the dead machinery, and the neglect and disregard of the living machinery." He now found that by giving the children more leisure, by keeping the mills well-aired and clean, by building good streets and houses in the village, and supplying good food in the shops, he got better work done, and so made a greater success of the mills.

In 1816 Owen started schools for his factory children. They all wore white clothes, and had lectures, music, drill, and dancing. There were no punishments and no rewards, and the children were taught to believe in truthfulness and good fellowship. We are told that the children seemed very gentle and happy, and would often pull Owen's hand or coat to attract his attention. Queen Victoria's father, the Duke of Kent, was only one of the many prominent men who were keenly interested in Owen's factory and school at New Lanark.

In the year of Waterloo (1815) Owen called a meeting of Scottish factory owners to try and persuade them to ask for a Factory Act to improve the condition of the children in mills. He worked very hard to get a really good Bill drawn up, but there was so much hostility and ill-feeling that the Bill, which became an Act in 1819, granted very much less than Owen



Police force assembled in Bonner's Field, London, June 12, 1848 (when a recurrence of the Chartist demonstration was expected).

(Illustrated London News, 1848.)

wanted. It applied only to cotton mills, and forbade the employment of children under nine, and for more than twelve hours a day. The employment of children for such long hours seems to us a cruel thing, but such



Robert Owen at the age of eighty.
(*National Portrait Gallery.*)

a limit was a beginning, and that halting step in the right direction was mainly due to Robert Owen.

The last part of Owen's life was given up to writing and working out ideas for social reform, and especially Co-operation. We shall have to mention him again. Here we must think of him as the first factory reformer. He loved his fellows, and a friend said of

him that "if he had seven thousand children instead of seven he would love them all devotedly." It is wonderful to think that round about a hundred years before the days of Bournville and Port Sunlight, and other model factory villages, Owen was carrying out the same ideas at New Lanark, and with almost as great success.

Owen was a pioneer not only of factory reform but also of the early form of Socialism. He was so discouraged by his failure to get Parliament to carry out his schemes that he became what we now call a "Communist"—that is, he began to teach that everything would come right if men lived together in villages, or small communities, and held their property in common. In 1817 he sent a report to Parliament in which his scheme for these communal settlements was worked out. He upheld the idea that the workman had the "right to the whole product of his labour," and about the year 1835 the word "Socialism" began to be used (instead of "Owenism") for a system in which the workers worked for themselves and for the State or "community" as a whole. Owen's ideas had great influence on the Chartists, but in his later years he became very bitter against religion, and this did his reputation much harm. We shall see later on how these early ideas of Socialism developed.

There was another prominent man, very different from the three of whom we have been reading but whose ideas lay behind the work of all of them. This was Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832), a shy, delicate, well-to-do law student, who lived quietly in or near London and wrote books which had very great influence on the men of the nineteenth century.

Bentham went to Westminster School at seven, to Oxford at twelve, and took his degree at sixteen—a very early age even for that period. When he grew up he did not want to practise as a lawyer, but he was very anxious to reform the laws, and, first of all, to find out why the laws existed and who were benefited by them. He showed by his writings that unless a law made for happiness, or, as he put it, for “the greatest happiness of the greatest number,” it was useless. Every law and every action of the State must be judged by its “utility”—that is to say, its power to give happiness. Bentham and his followers, among whom were James Mill and his more famous son, John Stuart Mill, were called “Utilitarians.” This is a very long and clumsy word, and Bentham himself was rather fond of using long words, but it just meant that their aim was to build up laws which were really useful and which made people happier. One of the great ideas of the Utilitarians was to remove everything that hindered the freedom of the individual person—and so their belief was bound up with the system of *laissez faire*. Place, who worked to remove the Combination Laws, was a friend and follower of



Jeremy Bentham.

(From a painting by Worthington, engraved by S. Freeman.)

Bentham. So was Cobbett, with his desire for reform, and Owen, with his earnest wish for the happiness of his workers.

Bentham was such a quiet person that he himself made little stir in his lifetime, but by his writings he made a very great stir in politics. He taught that Parliament, to do its duty, must be useful—not sleepy and corrupt, as it was in the eighteenth century, but always experimenting to find out whether the result of the operation of existing laws was good or bad. The nineteenth century swept away nearly all the savage old laws which hanged men for stealing, and made great crimes out of small offences ; it also swept away a great many abuses and unjust privileges, and passed numbers of very important new laws for the good of the people, about which we shall read later. This great keenness and activity, which so altered the history of this country and so improved its conditions, was very largely due to the influence of the shy and gentle philosopher, Jeremy Bentham.

CHAPTER 8.—THE LAND AND THE LABOURER (1795-1846)

The village after "enclosures"—The Game Laws—Poor relief—The labourers' revolt of 1830—The "hungry forties"—The Anti-Corn Law League and Free Trade

"Where Plenty smiles, alas! she smiles for few,
And those who taste not, yet behold her store,
Are as the slaves that dig the golden ore,
The wealth around them makes them doubly poor."

G. CRABBE: *The Village* (1783).

By the time of the Reform Bill large farms had come to stay, and, as we saw in an earlier chapter, the "Deserted Village" about which Goldsmith wrote was very common. Until the middle of the nineteenth century England was still a country of prosperous landowners. There were only a very few manufacturers in Parliament, and those among them who wanted to be members of the governing class often bought large estates and settled down as country squires.

The Industrial Revolution was an accomplished fact, but nobody quite realized its full significance, and that it would spread farther and farther over the face of the country. The workers were striking not so much for better wages and shorter hours as against machinery and all the conditions of factory work. They were still peasants, and their memories went back

to the green fields of an earlier England. The land-owners disliked the manufacturers. In fact, nearly everybody preferred country life, and wanted to return to the old system. After about 1850, however, this feeling changed. The workers settled down under the new system, and did not struggle against machinery any longer. They knew that it was stronger than they were.

Now, when most of the land was enclosed and the open fields broken up, the village community consisted of the squire, who was also a magistrate ; the parson, who received "tithes," or a tenth part of certain produce of the land ; one or two large farmers ; and the labourers and their families.

The squire of the early nineteenth century was a very important person. He might own a great deal of land, and he was often a member of Parliament as well as a Justice of the Peace. He lived in the largest house in the village, and, as a rule, the farmers and many of the labourers were his tenants.

One of the chief causes of discontent among the village labourers, and one reason why they did not always "bless the squire and his relations," was the strict enforcement of the Game Laws.

As the landlords grew richer and more luxurious, they began to set aside part of their estates in which to preserve great numbers of pheasants and partridges. They employed gamekeepers to see that the birds were not disturbed, and at certain times of the year they and their friends held large shooting-parties to kill the birds with as much energy as they hunted the fox. Even as early as 1760 there were quite severe laws against trespassers and poachers who meddled with the game, but the most terrifying of these laws

were passed between 1770 and 1828. Any one found with a net or a snare for catching game was sentenced to imprisonment, sometimes for as long as two years, with hard labour. Later, a man found poaching by night might be sentenced to transportation for seven years.

Now these severe Game Laws were passed just at the time when the labourers were suffering great distress and were on the verge of starvation. The temptation to snare an occasional hare or pheasant to put in the family pot was very great for a man with a hungry family. Many of them preferred to take the risk of being caught. Cobbett tells us of a man whom he met breaking stones by the roadside, and who, when asked how he lived on 2s. 6d. a week, replied, "I don't live upon it; I poach. It is better to be hanged than to be starved to death."

Poaching gangs became very common, and there were often fights in the woods at night in which men were sometimes killed or wounded. To use weapons, even in self-defence, when attacked by a gamekeeper, was a crime punishable by death. Not only so, but until they were forbidden by law, man-traps and spring-guns were used by the landlords, often with terrible results. We are told that between 1827 and 1830 over 8,500 men were convicted under the Game Laws. Some were hanged; some were shipped over to Australia, amid terrible conditions; and hundreds were imprisoned and whipped. There was a mere handful of men in Parliament who tried to point out that the labourers needed help and pity more than punishment. It was only in the middle of the century, when distress was not so great and the laws had been

made less severe, that poaching began to grow less. In the meantime the villages had lost many of their strongest and most courageous young men, and many homes had been made desolate.

The Game Laws, then, were one cause of the wretchedness of village life in the first half of the century. Another cause was one which we shall have

DORSET

ANY PERSON WILFULLY INJURING
ANY PART OF THIS COUNTY BRIDGE
WILL BE GUILTY OF FELONY AND
UPON CONVICTION LIABLE TO BE
TRANSPORTED FOR LIFE
BY THE COURT
7&8 GEO 4 C30 S13 T. FOOKS

Notice still in existence on a bridge in Dorchester, Dorset.

to consider again in the chapter about the Poor Law. This was the system under which nearly all the men of the village became what we call paupers—that is to say, they were helped out of the poor rates and received “poor relief” (Latin *pauper*, poor). Let us consider very briefly how this happened.

Round about the end of the eighteenth century the village labourers had lost their land, their wives and children no longer had work to do, food was at famine prices because of the French war, harvests

were usually bad, and those who had labouring work to do earned very low wages. In 1795 the Berkshire magistrates met at a place called Speenhamland to decide what to do about giving the labourers a living wage. They finally drew up a scale under which, when a loaf of bread could be bought for 1s., a labourer should have 3s. a week for himself and 1s. 6d. for every other member of his family. Unfortunately the magistrates did not stop there, but agreed that any man who was not paid these wages should have the difference made up out of the poor rate.

Now what were the results of this system, which spread very quickly over nearly the whole of England and lasted until 1834? Firstly, the farmer did not care how low a wage he paid, because it could be made up by the parish. Wages, therefore, became lower than ever. Secondly, the labourer did not care about being industrious or thrifty, because, however lazy he was, he received his parish money. We are told of one parish in which there was only one man who was not a pauper or a bankrupt. This system had a very bad effect on the character of the villager, who had usually been free and independent. Thirdly, the rate levied for poor relief of course went up by an enormous amount, and in the long run the landowners and farmers had to pay in rates what they might have paid in wages with greater benefit to all, including themselves.

During the war the landowners and farmers were very prosperous—the latter owing to the high prices which they got for their corn, and the former owing to the high rents which were paid to them for the improved and enclosed land. Some of the farmers even kept servants in livery, and many of them lived

in fine style. But when the war was over the prices of corn and meat fell again. This helped the labourers' wages to go a little farther, but it was bad for the farmers. Many landowners and farmers became bankrupt, and many let their land go out of cultivation, and it was soon covered with thistles and weeds. They were said to be "hanging on like sailors to the masts or hulls of a wreck." In 1815, as we have seen, the Parliament of landlords passed the "Waterloo Corn Law," preventing the import of wheat when the price in England was less than 80s. a quarter. The farmers hoped that under this law the price of corn would be always high, and they neglected their animals, poultry, and vegetables, and staked everything on corn. So much corn was grown that its price did not reach 80s., and the farmers were not at all contented.

But although prices were not high enough to suit the farmers, they were too high for the labourer living in his poor cottage, little better than a hovel, hardly ever tasting meat, doing casual labour at one place after another, and flung into prison if he poached one of the squire's hares.

In 1830 four harvest labourers were found under a hedge dead of starvation, and it was in this same year that the last revolt of the agricultural labourers took place. This rising spread all over the southern counties of England, where the labourers were worse off than in the North. The agitators, who had no special leaders, asked for wages of 2s. 6d. a day, sometimes less, and for rents and tithes to be reduced. They complained of the new steam-driven threshing machines, of some of the overseers who dealt out poor

relief harshly, and of the crowds of poorly-paid Irish labourers who had been brought over as agricultural workers. One of their petitions was worded as follows: "We, the labourers of Ringmer and the surrounding villages, having for a long period suffered the greatest privation and endured the most debasing treatment with the greatest resignation and forbearance . . . would appeal to the good sense of the magistracy . . . and ask these gentlemen . . . whether 7*d.* a day is sufficient for a working man, hale and hearty, to keep up the strength necessary to the execution of the labour he has to do." Some of the letters to the magistrates were not so polite as this, and some even ended with such a phrase as, "Beware of the fatel daggar!"

The rioters had no special agreed policy. They did not organize marches to London like Wat Tyler and his peasants. They gathered together and wrecked the threshing machines, burnt the ricks, and often demanded money from the squires, parsons, and farmers. In the year 1909 Mr. W. H. Hudson, the famous writer, spoke to an old Wiltshire man of eighty-nine, who remembered as a schoolboy watching the rioters of 1830, when the market was broken up and agricultural machines were smashed. "The picture that remains in his mind," wrote Mr. Hudson, "is of a great excited crowd, in which men and cattle and sheep were mixed together in the wide street, and of shouting and noise of smashing machinery, and finally of the mob pouring forth over the down on its way to the next village, he and other little boys following their march." *

* *A Shepherd's Life*. Chapter xvii-

The movement was a failure, although in a few villages wages were raised. The ringleaders were punished very severely. Under an Act of 1827 to destroy a threshing machine might mean transportation for seven years, while firing a rick was punishable with death. Although not one death was caused by the rioters, several of them were hanged, and hundreds were transported either for life or for long periods. Many of these were boys, and some were the only breadwinners of their homes.

This sad story shows us very clearly what a terrible gulf there was between the rich and the poor of that period, and how little they understood each other. The large farmers often employed bailiffs and stewards, and did not live on friendly and neighbourly terms with the cottagers, as some of the well-to-do people had done in the old village.

After the rising of 1830 the village labourers returned to their toil, and it was forty years before their voice was heard again.

When Queen Victoria came to the throne as a young girl in 1837, the tide seemed to turn. Farmers began to improve their lands by using new and better systems of drainage and manuring, and they spent more money on their farm buildings and on machinery. Nevertheless the years from 1839 to 1846 were known, with only too much reason, as the "hungry forties," and owing to bad harvests the poor were very often on the edge of starvation. "I could tell you," wrote one man, "of mothers dividing a farthing herring and a halfpenny-worth of potatoes among a family of seven." In 1845 potato disease ruined the crop in Ireland, which meant starvation for the Irish peasants.



Carrying the corn ; or, the Free-trade harvest-home.
(*"Punch"* cartoon on the Abolition of the Corn Laws, 1846.)

An Anti-Corn-Law League had been formed, which worked hard for one object—the repeal of the Corn Laws. The leaders of the League were Richard Cobden and John Bright, both Lancashire manufacturers. For eight years the League held meetings, flooded the country with pamphlets, and collected thousands of pounds to further its objects. The manufacturers believed in what they called “Free Trade.” Under this system the duties would be



Richard Cobden.

removed from foreign corn, so that it could come freely into the country. There would then, they said, be so much corn for the people that it would be very cheap. Also, they pointed out, the foreigners would have to be paid for the corn they sent over, and this could be done by giving them English cotton and woollen goods in exchange. So English manufacturers would flourish.

The people who opposed the repeal of the Corn Laws were, of course, the landowners and farmers, who wanted high prices. But Cobden's facts and arguments seemed so strong that at last, in the House of Commons, Sir Robert Peel, the Prime Minister, threw down his papers and, turning to one of his ministers, said, “Answer this man if you can, for I cannot.” In 1846 the Corn Laws were repealed, and Britain soon afterwards became a Free Trade country. This change, as we shall see, had a very marked effect on her subsequent history.

CHAPTER 9.—THE FACTORY AND THE TOWN (1815-50)

The early factories—Child labour—Factory Act of 1833—Women and children in the mines—The bad and good in the factory system—Growth of manufacturing towns

‘ ‘ For oh,’ say the children, ‘ we are weary,
And we cannot run or leap.
If we cared for any meadows it were merely
To drop down in them and sleep.’ ”

E. B. BROWNING : *The Cry of the Children* (1843).

WHAT was this factory system like against which the Chartists rebelled, and which at first caused so much misery ?

The period of the French war was the time of greatest distress for the village labourer, as well as the time when factory conditions were at their worst. A great many mills worked by water had been built at the end of the eighteenth century in some of the dales of Lancashire and Yorkshire. Most of these were small, and many were very badly adapted for their purpose. Conditions were, on the whole, worse in these small out-of-the-way factories than in the big new mills, worked by steam-power and situated in towns, which began to be built in great numbers after 1815. In 1803 there were only 2,400 power-looms in the country, but in 1835 there were over 100,000, of which 90,000 were in the cotton trade

alone. By the time of the forties hand-workers were very rare, and their work could no longer compete with the goods made by machines.

We have already seen how, under the system of *laissez faire*, the Government decided not to interfere with the manufacturers by making any rules for their factories, but gave them a free hand. We have also seen how, because most of the factory work was simple and did not need any great strength or skill, the manufacturers employed women and children whose labour was cheap.

For the first twenty years of the century, when many mills were in the country and far from any town, batches of pauper children from the workhouses used to be handed over to the employers, who fed and clothed them, paid them either no wages or very little, and worked them very hard, often for sixteen hours a day. So bad was the treatment of some of these children that in 1802 an Act was passed to limit their hours to twelve and prevent night work, but it became almost a dead letter. The evils only ceased when factories were set up on the coalfields or in towns, and employed children who lived with their parents.

For these children, too, the conditions were often really terrible. At the age of six, seven, or eight, they were herded into the factories to mind and clean machines, sweep the floors, piece together broken threads, or change the bobbins. They worked from fourteen to fifteen hours a day for six days a week, and were often paid no more than a penny a day. Their meals, such as they were, were eaten in the factory amid all the dust and dirt. The overseers at

the factory would often "strap" the children who were too tired to go on working. As one writer has said: "In stench, in heated rooms, amid the whirling of a thousand wheels, little fingers and little feet were kept in ceaseless action, forced into unnatural activity by blows from the heavy hands and feet of the merciless overlooker . . ." Towards the end of the day the children were so tired that many accidents happened—it was not a rare thing for a child to be killed by falling into the machinery. Many became crippled and stunted by constant bending and overwork. One deformed boy, who had been quite straight and healthy when he entered the factory, told the officials: "I have been beaten till I was black and blue in my face, and have had my ears torn. I was beaten because I had mixed a few empty bobbins, having not any place to put them into separate. I was generally beaten most at the end of the day, when I grew tired and fatigued. In the morning I felt stiff, very stark indeed."

"Well can I recollect," said the Earl of Shaftesbury in one of his speeches, "waiting at the factory gates to see the children come out, and a set of sad, dejected, cadaverous creatures they were. . . . They seemed to me, such were their crooked shapes, like a mass of crooked alphabets."

The sad thing was that in the early days of factories men were often unable to find work, or if they had work it did not bring in enough to support their families. The women and the children therefore became the breadwinners of the home, and even the children's tiny wages made a great difference when food was at famine prices.

There were, however, a few keen champions of the mill-hands, chief among whom were Lord Shaftesbury, "the children's friend," and Robert Owen, about whose work we have already read. These men fought against the idea of *laissez faire*, and pointed out that women and children needed protection because they were too weak to stand up for themselves. We saw how, in 1819, Owen managed to get an Act passed which tried to prevent children under nine from working in cotton mills, and to limit the hours for children from nine to sixteen years of age to twelve hours a day.

But it was only by the efforts of Lord Shaftesbury and others that, in 1833, a really efficient Factory Act was passed. This forbade children under thirteen to work more than nine hours a day; the hours of boys and girls from thirteen to eighteen were limited to sixty-nine hours a week, and no one under eighteen was allowed to do night work. More important still, inspectors were appointed to see that the Act was carried out, and the regulations applied to woollen, flax, silk, and linen mills as well as to cotton mills.

This Act was bitterly fought by the employers, but they soon found that it did not bring ruin, as they expected, but prosperity. The workers were healthier and happier, and worked better, so that they produced more goods. People began to realize, as Owen had done, that humanity paid in the long run.

Unfortunately the early Factory Acts did not apply to the mines, where women and children were working in conditions even more pitiful. There was a huge demand for coal for the new steam factories and iron-works, and the pits were often badly equipped and ventilated, and very dangerous. Accidents were so

common that in some districts they did not even trouble to hold inquests on miners who were killed. Women, and children of six and over, were often employed for twelve hours a day or more underground. The smallest children were "trappers"—that is, they sat all day in the pitch-black darkness, opening and shutting trap-doors as the trucks came through. Others pushed or pulled trucks full of coal, often on their hands and knees. They were chained



A "hurrier."

(From the Official Report, 1842.)

to the trucks, and worked almost naked, and developed terrible sores on their bodies where the chains rubbed them. Others again, both women and children, would climb up ladders to the surface, carrying baskets of coal on their backs. If these children stumbled or fell asleep at their work, or if they meddled with any machinery or devices which they did not understand, terrible accidents might and often did happen.

These children were healthier than the factory children, perhaps because they had rather better wages and could get more food. But their lives must

have been very wretched. Some of them hardly ever saw daylight at all. These conditions were not changed until 1842, when an Act was passed forbidding all women, as well as girls and boys under ten, to work underground.

There are two ways of looking at the factory system as set up after the Industrial Revolution. From one point of view it may be regarded as an evil thing, and from the other as a sign of progress. Let us consider



A "thruster."

(From the *Official Report*, 1842.)

the bad side first. What was it that made the workers, whose hours had always been long and work hard, hate factory work so bitterly? It was, firstly, very monotonous. Men and women became the slaves of their machines. "A spinner," says one report, "is required to do but one thing throughout his whole life: to watch a pair of wheels and to walk three steps forward and three steps backward." This was a change from spinning or weaving at home, where the worker could rest himself by a turn in the garden or a gossip with a neighbour. Secondly, it took the

factory worker a long time to get used to the discipline and rules of a factory. He was the slave not only of a machine but of the factory bell. The rules were very strict, and the fines for breaking them were heavy. A spinner often had to pay a shilling fine for such offences as whistling, washing himself during work hours, or being five minutes late, though it was seldom that he had a clock in the house. In some mills the workers were not allowed to send out for water to drink, even though the temperature was over 80 degrees.

Another bad feature of factory work was what was known as the Truck System, under which, especially in country districts, wages were often paid partly in orders on the shop or public-house owned by the employer. Moreover, many of the workers had to live in houses supplied by their employers, and their rents were deducted from their wages.

Lastly, one great drawback of the factory system in early days was the length of the women's working day. The women had to leave their homes at dawn, and returned late at night, after working twelve to fourteen hours. The tiny children had to be looked after by some old woman or an older child. There was often no one to keep the home clean or to cook the food for the family on their return from the factory. Bread and cheese, eaten hurriedly before the worker fell asleep from exhaustion, was the usual fare. It was not until Acts of Parliament, in 1847 and 1850, set up a ten hours day and a half-holiday on Saturday for women and young people that conditions became more bearable.

We must not, however, think that everything about

the factory system in these early days was bad. It was a time when people had quite different ideas about cruelty and overwork from those of to-day. Life was very hard and comfortless for all but the rich, but it was not only the landowners and manufacturers who



Samuel Crompton.

were what we now call cruel. Very often the conditions of work in the home had been much more shocking than those in the factory, and the hours were often equally long. The cotton hand-loom weavers often lived in damp cellars because it was better for their work that the air should be cool and moist. They and their families usually lived in one room, in which they worked, ate, and slept. The streets and

alleys from which they sent out their cloth were often full of dirt and disease. Both hand-weavers and spinners were wretchedly paid, and had to work long and exhausting hours, rarely, if ever, stirring from the one workroom. Children were sometimes made to work as soon as they could crawl, and we are told that "their parents were the hardest of taskmasters." Crompton, who invented the spinning mule, tells how he was made to work in the home as soon as he could walk. "The cotton-wool was put into a deep brown tub with a strong ley of soap and suds. My mother then tucked up my petticoats about my waist and put me into the tub to tread upon the cotton at the bottom. . . . This process was continued till the tub became so full that I could not longer safely stand in it, when a chair was placed beside it and I held on by the back." A family all working together in a small, crowded, badly-ventilated room was not at all an ideal system.

Not all factory employers were harsh, and as time went on conditions very much improved. It was much easier for the Government to look after the factory workers than the home workers. The former had better wages and more regular employment, and they were able to meet together and work for better conditions. When the worst of the evils had been remedied by the time of the "forties," factory life was not nearly such a nightmare to the workers. Not only did the textile factories become very busy and very efficient, but they created a great many new trades and gave employment to more people. As transport, and especially railways, developed, there was a demand for drivers, porters, bargees, dock labourers, and so on. Building workers were wanted to build the new

towns and factories, and there was a steady demand for coal-miners, engineers, and ironworkers. As the towns sprang up they needed shops and every kind of trade and business. Gradually all these new trades and occupations absorbed most of those people who had been thrown out of work by the coming of machinery.

New factory and mining towns were springing up in the first half of the century, and although they have been very much improved, some of them are still poor places to live in. Let us consider how this state of affairs arose.

When factories were set up, or coal pits opened up, a demand for "hands" would go out, and thousands of workers would flock into the district. Sometimes new towns would have to be quickly built; sometimes huge districts were more or less suddenly added to old towns like Manchester, Leeds, and Sheffield. Jerry-builders threw up houses as quickly and as cheaply as they could, and the result was acres and acres of "slums," which we still have to suffer and which make many of our towns an eyesore and a disgrace. "In general," it was said of the new factory districts of Manchester, "the streets of these suburbs are unpaved, with a dungheap or ditch in the middle; the houses are built back to back, without ventilation or drainage, and whole families are limited to a corner of a cellar or garret." "Men were so engrossed in building mills that towns were left to build themselves." There were no Medical Officers, no Housing and Sanitary Committees; no drains, and no dustmen. Houses were built with cellars in which one or more families lived. Until after 1850

there was no decent water-supply. Wells and pumps were far too few, and water for cooking was often drawn from the nearest ditch. In one factory town, in 1843, we learn that a worker's average age at death was just over eighteen, and half the deaths among the



The "Black Country."

working class were those of children under five. That is to say, few of the children born in these conditions of dirt, disease, and overcrowding lived to be over five years old.

As the towns grew bigger and the factories spread, and the smoke from their chimneys grew denser, the people living in the centre of the town got farther and farther away from the country. It is little wonder

that their pleasures were often brutal. Bull-baiting and cock-fighting were both popular, especially in the mining districts. Many of the open spaces in the towns were enclosed and taken over by the landowners, and the people had no place for sport except the streets.

To-day we have begun to realize that even small houses can be pleasant and convenient, and that towns can be carefully planned with wide streets and open spaces. Factories are built with large, airy workrooms and big windows. Our ancestors of the early nineteenth century were so bewildered by the new life and the new "power" that they built just anyhow, and hoped for the best. There was nobody to interfere with them, and so long as their mills turned out goods and brought in money, there were very few of them who cared how their workers were housed, and fed, and paid. The second half of the century saw a great change in the feelings of men in control towards their fellows, who looked to them for guidance.

CHAPTER 10.—WORKING TOGETHER (1800-67)

Regulation of wages—Eighteenth-century clubs—The Combination Acts and the history of the Trade-Unions—Friendly Societies—The Co-operative movement—Social life of the workers—Railways and newspapers

Ye have shorn and bound the Samson, and robbed him of learning's light ;

But his sluggish brain is moving, his sinews have all their might.
Look well to your gates of Gaza, your privilege, pride, and caste !
The Giant is blind and thinking, and his locks are growing fast.

J. J. ROCHE : *For the People.*

So far, the story of the workers has been largely a story of failure and disappointment. But in this chapter we have to tell the story of great successes. It was in the first half of the nineteenth century that three movements began which are very powerful to-day—the Trade-Union movement, the Co-operative movement, and the Friendly Societies. These are very important, because, until the workers began to join together to better their own conditions, and to collect money to help their cause, they could not make any headway. The little societies which Robert Owen founded, where men tried to live and work in common, were too odd, or, as we should say, “ cranky ” or individualistic, to last ; and the Chartist movement was badly led and managed, and soon came to an end as a concerted effort. But the Trade-Unions and

the Friendly Societies and the Co-operative stores grew and flourished, because they were built up by men of common sense on a sound basis.

Let us look first at the story of the Trade-Unions. Now, in the days of Queen Elizabeth, and for a long time afterwards, wages were fixed by the Justices of the Peace, and there were strict laws about trade and apprentices which the master had to observe. But when the Industrial Revolution came times changed so very quickly that it was quite impossible for the justices to fix wages any longer, and in 1813 the Government at last gave up the idea that it could keep any kind of hold over trade and wages. The old laws of Elizabeth's day, which protected the worker, were swept away, and the State settled down, as we have seen, into a *laissez faire* policy. Before that time the workers still clung to the idea that the State might step in and fix a wage for them, but when that hope was gone it became most important for the workers to unite and see if they could not bargain with the employers on more equal terms.

In the eighteenth century there had been a number of workmen's clubs formed for all sorts of purposes—clubs for good fellowship, and benefit clubs, which helped members in sickness and old age. And whenever several workmen got together over their pipes and pots of ale they would naturally begin to discuss their work and their wages. Many of these clubs were formed of members of the same trade—the journeyman tailors, the brushmakers, hatters, and carpenters, and many more. The members were usually highly skilled artisans of a good type, and they became very active in bargaining with their employers

and doing everything they possibly could to keep up wages. Strikes became quite common.

The employers did not at all like the idea of the workers combining against them, and were also very much afraid of the revolutionary ideas which were drifting over from France. The result of their fears was the Combination Acts of 1799 and 1800, about which we read in connection with Francis Place. These Acts forbade all unions of workmen, and also of employers; but although many thousands of workers were imprisoned for belonging to illegal unions, no one ever took proceedings against any employers who might join with others for a common end.

These laws against Trade-Unions lasted until 1824, and during this time the history of the Trade-Unions is a record of disaster. Some clubs and associations still met, but they had to be kept very secret, and they often had secret oaths and passwords and ceremonies, which very much alarmed outsiders who got to know about them. Quite often the law would pounce on one of these Unions, and its members would be sent to prison for at least three months.

The unfairness of these laws did very much to keep the workers depressed and poor in the first part of the nineteenth century. At a time when prices were high, wages low, and conditions miserable, every effort the workman made to improve his lot was said to be illegal. A master could dismiss all his workers if they would not accept his wages, however low; but if all the workers combined to give notice because of low wages they became criminals. In 1816, for instance, seven scissors-grinders were imprisoned for three months because they belonged to the "Misfortune

Club," which paid out-of-work benefit and tried to keep up the level of wages.

There was then no police force, and many Unions continued to meet and even to strike without being arrested, but the Combination Laws cast a dark shadow over these wretched years.



Joseph Hume.

We have seen how, in 1824, by the pluck and hard work of Francis Place and his friend in Parliament, Joseph Hume, the Combination Laws were repealed. This really meant the birth of a new and very vigorous Trade-Union movement. The Unions burst into life everywhere, and strikes were the order of the day. In 1825 a new Act forbade combinations for illegal purposes, but it permitted unions of work-

men for the purpose of considering wages and hours of work. It also allowed strikes—that is to say, it was no longer to be against the law for bodies of men to stop working as a protest.

This Act meant that Trade-Unions were now accepted as part of the life of the country, and although many people very much disliked and feared them, they were recognized as important. Even Dr. Arnold, the famous headmaster of Rugby, called the Trade-Union "a fearful engine of mischief, ready to riot

or assassinate." We must remember, when we read violent words like these, that the "governing" classes and the "working" classes were still living very far apart from each other. They had not yet got over the shock of the new factory system which had made employers and workers more often enemies than friends. After the repeal of the Combination Laws the Trade-Unions went through a period of great violence, and this made the employers and the politicians more angry than ever.

From about 1829 to 1834 Robert Owen and other leaders tried a new plan. Instead of having a Trade-Union for every trade, they aimed at one great Union which would include every kind of worker from every part of the country. Owen's scheme was called the "Grand National" Union, and at one time it had over half a million members, and it aimed at a general strike in every trade. But it was too big, and not well enough organized to last, and the Government thought it was very dangerous, and took every possible step to injure it. So alarmed did they get that in 1834 they arrested six Dorchester farm labourers who had started a little club to try and raise their wages of 7s. a week. These men met together and took the oath of membership of the "Grand National." For this act, which was called a "conspiracy," they were sentenced to transportation across the seas for seven years.

Until this time some Unions had practised a very quaint secret ritual, with their members dressed in surplices, going about blindfold, and carrying skeletons and swords, and other similar things. But after the Dorchester labourers' case all these oaths and ceremonies began to die out, and they were only kept up

in the Friendly Societies, which did not come within the action of the law.

The "Grand National" did not last long, and in their anger the employers began trying to refuse em-



Memorial of the Dorchester Martyrs at Tolpuddle.

(Photo: W. B. Tucker, Poole.)

ployment to Union members. There was such distress that the workers lost heart, and the Chartist movement, which was more lively and more violent, put the Trade-Union movement into the shade for a time.

But there was life in the movement yet, and when Chartism collapsed in 1848, the golden days of

the Trade-Unions began. From 1850 onwards we can really recognize the Trade-Unions that we know to-day, with their offices and their officials, and their funds and their journals. After a long time of depression trade became steadier, food cheaper and more plentiful, wages were higher, and the workers better educated. The early unions of workers, with their half-starved, frightened members, crushed, spied upon and hated, were gone. The new Unions were built up between 1850 and 1860. Each trade had its Union, and collected subscriptions from its members, and it usually had a paid secretary. It was no longer what Adam Smith had called it, a club for "merriment and discussion," but an organization for uniting the workers of a trade and carefully studying their interests.

The early leaders of the workers—men like Cobbett, and Owen, and Hume—were for the most part members of the middle class, but in the fifties and sixties a number of working-men leaders came forward, and to them we owe the marvellous growth and strength of Trade-Unionism. The best known of these men are perhaps Robert Applegarth, a carpenter, and George Odger, a shoemaker.

The first important new Union to be organized was the Amalgamated Society of Engineers in 1851, and other large Unions were formed on the same lines. The policy of these working Trade-Unionists was a peaceful one. They devoted all their energies to educating and increasing the number of their members, and adding to their funds. They did not approve of strikes, except as a last resort. The Unions were moderate and law-abiding.

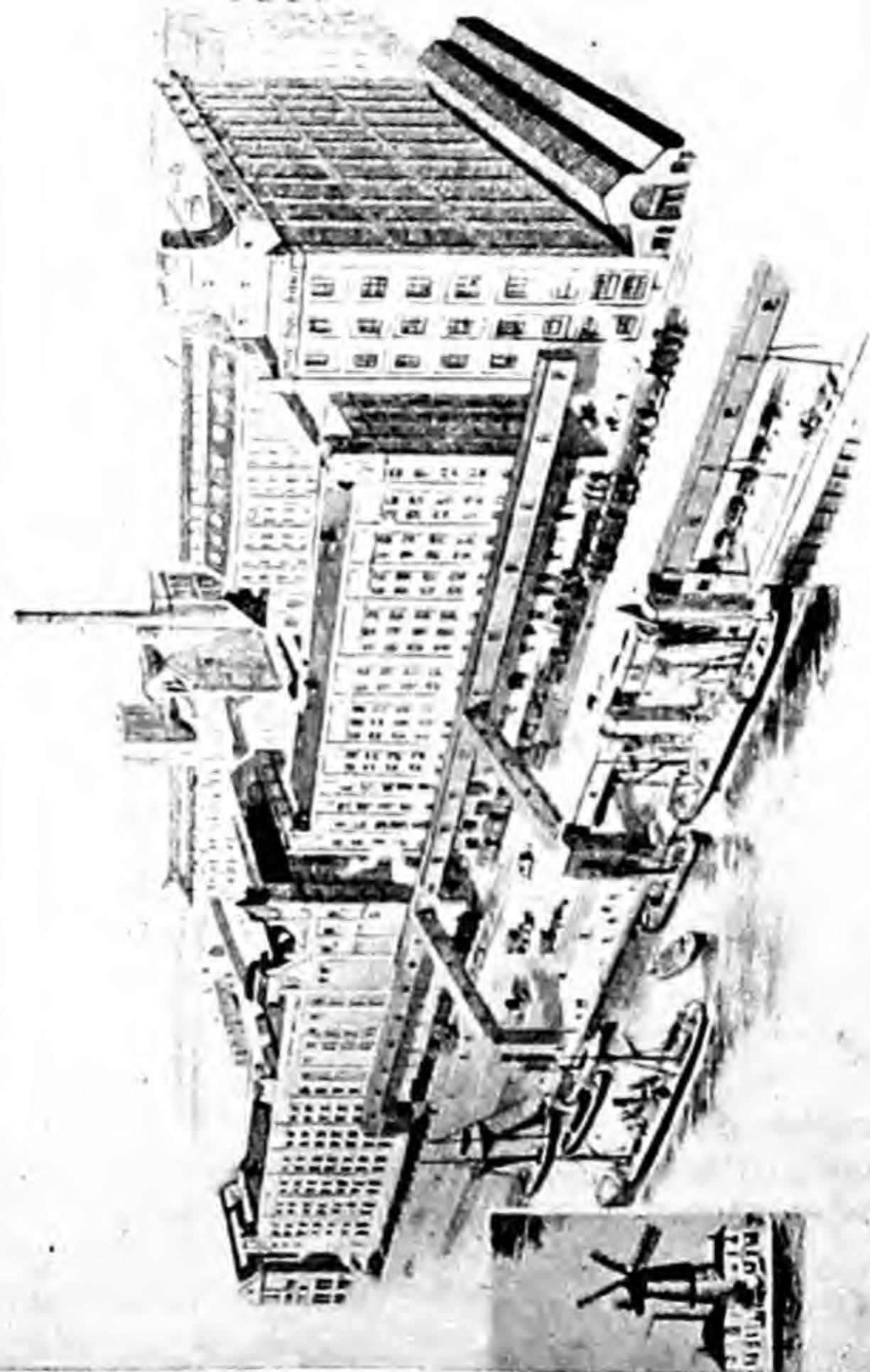
Besides the Unions for each trade, Trades Councils were formed, which collected together representatives from all the trades in one district. A little later, in 1868, a congress of Trade-Unionists was called, and this Trade-Union Congress still goes on. In a later chapter we shall see how important the Trade-Union movement became in politics.

The little trade clubs of the eighteenth century, then, had a great future before them. Other clubs which prospered very much in the nineteenth century were the benefit clubs, or Friendly Societies. These started in a very small way, when a few artisans or mechanics would meet together for friendly talk, and would pay a few pence a week into a fund which paid out sickness benefit and funeral money for the members. These little "insurance" societies were very popular, and became numerous and, in time, wealthy. They kept up a great deal of the ritual and dress of the old guilds. Some of them became merged in the Trade-Unions; others remained separate. In the first half of the nineteenth century these Friendly Societies were organized under a Registrar, and then they had to keep to certain rules. As trade prospered so did they, and by the end of the century they included millions of workers, and many of them, such as the Manchester Unity of Oddfellows and the Ancient Order of Foresters, became exceedingly wealthy. Later on, when they were given the task of administering National Health Insurance benefit, they became rather more like ordinary insurance societies and less like the old Friendly Societies with their weekly meetings of "good fellowship."

A third great movement began at the time of which

we are speaking, and this also had a wonderful success after very small beginnings. This was the Co-operative movement, of which we are reminded whenever we see a Co-operative store. Robert Owen, who had so many new ideas, was one of the first men to start Co-operative stores, but he had not thought out his ideas quite carefully enough. Co-operation means "working together," and Owen thought this was a far better plan for industry and trade than competition, which seemed to mean working against some one else. He maintained that the profits which were made when goods were sold should not go into the pocket of one man or company, but should go towards the education and recreation of the people of the town or district.

Owen's ideas had a very great influence, because he was known as a wise employer and a good man, but it was not until 1844 that any one worked out the ideas of Co-operation in a really business-like way. In that year twenty-eight Rochdale workmen, mostly Chartists, who were known as the "Rochdale Pioneers," each subscribed £1 towards the purchase of a small shop. They decided to manage the shop themselves, and to collect members, each of whom paid a small sum and were then members of the Co-operative Society, which ran a general store. The goods were all sold at the ordinary market prices, but the profits were put aside and divided among the members according to the quantity of goods they had bought. A member's share of the profits became known as his dividend. This system of shops managed by members of the society, who appointed their own officials and workers and shared the profits, was very popular, and the idea spread quickly, especially in the North of



The Co-operative Sun Flour Mills, Manchester.
(Inset : The first Co-operative flour mill, 1795.)
(By kind permission of the C.W.S.)

England. Co-operative stores sprang up in every large town. The members knew that if they did not get good stuff at reasonable prices it was their own fault, as they could always change the management or working staff if it was not giving satisfaction.

In the seventies the Co-operative Societies started making goods as well as selling them, and the Co-operative Wholesale Society built large factories and mills for making the goods sold by their stores. By the end of the century there were over a thousand societies, with over a million members. Most of the people who bought at a Co-operative store in those days, as in our own day, probably did not trouble much about the original idea of the Rochdale Pioneers—the idea of “working together.” They went to “the Co-op.” because it was good and cheap, and because every half-year they collected a dividend which they could not get at any other kind of shop. But there were a good many men and women who were really keen about the wider and fuller idea of Co-operation, and they tried to make the Societies, and the Co-operative Union which joined them together, agents for the creation of friendships and the extension of education. The Co-operative movement, which had its tiny beginnings in the disturbed days of the Chartists, is still a great force, and has taught many people a valuable lesson : that the workers were able, by their own energy, common sense, and honesty, to build up a sound and prosperous business.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century it was very difficult to get things done that needed doing. The workers were very scattered, and most of them were poor and uneducated. With some noteworthy

exceptions already mentioned, most of the efforts to improve their lot were made by a few men of a different class, and in their efforts these men stood alone, and were not at first backed up by the bulk of the people. But gradually, as education improved and towns developed, groups of men were found here and there working together for some special object. There were the Trade-Unions, the Friendly Societies, Co-operative Societies, Working Men's Clubs and Institutes, Sunday schools—which were originally established by Robert Raikes of Gloucester to teach working children to read and write and keep them off the streets—and so on. All these did a very good work in helping the people who most needed it to live a really social life, to gain knowledge and experience, and to work hard for the betterment of their fellows.

There were three things which made a tremendous difference to the social life of the workers in the middle of the nineteenth century. These were the growth of the railways, the coming of cheap newspapers, and cheap postage. When railways became common in the middle of the century people were able to travel about, to see other towns and districts, and meet other people as they never had done before. It was thus much easier for the organizers of the Unions and other societies to do their work and hold their meetings, and so to spread their ideas over a wide area. Social life was no longer limited to a man's village or town, but the same ideas and customs spread all over the country, and the Lancashire miner did not feel quite so much of a "foreigner" when he met the Suffolk labourer, except for the marked differences of their everyday speech.

The newspapers broke down barriers even more, although the Government tax on them was not finally taken off until 1855. But even before that date, from the days when Cobbett sold his *Register*, which was sold for 2*d.* because he printed no "news" in it, newspapers were eagerly read. Several houses would join to buy a paper, and many people would hire old papers to read at 1*d.* an hour. There were several London daily papers at the time of the Reform Bill, but after the tax came off they increased by leaps and bounds.

Another very useful aid to the spread of knowledge was the Penny Post, which was introduced in 1840 as a result of the efforts of Sir Rowland Hill. Before this date ordinary inland letters cost over a shilling to send a distance of more than 300



Sir Rowland Hill.

miles. In 1844 the telegraph came into regular use, and this made it easier to get news quickly, and so the newspapers became more reliable and up-to-date, especially when, in the sixties, cables were used to carry messages across the sea.

About 1850, when the time of greatest distress was over, the working man had many more advantages than the squire of the eighteenth century. He could usually read, he could get books and newspapers, and send letters cheaply; he could take his family to the seaside by train, and through London on an omnibus.

We should have found him very much easier to talk to than his father or grandfather. England was a very much more civilized country in 1850 than in 1800, though there were still terrible blots on her social life, as we shall see in later chapters.

CHAPTER II.—PHILANTHROPY, OR DOING GOOD (1800-54)

The Age of Reason—Spread of societies in the nineteenth century—Wilberforce and Anti-Slavery—Lord Shaftesbury and his work—The Christian Socialists—The Evangelical movement—Humanity in literature

" Build up heroic lives, and all
Be like a sheathen sabre,
Ready to flash out at God's call,
O Chivalry of Labour ! "

GERALD MASSEY (the " Christian Socialist "):
To-day and To-morrow (1850).

WE are often told that the eighteenth century was the Age of Reason, when head mattered more than heart. Men and women, at least among the educated classes, were very well-mannered and correct in their behaviour, and they liked fine, solid buildings, and carefully finished poetry and prose like that of Pope and Dr. Johnson, but many of them were not very kind or sympathetic towards the poor and unfortunate. There is a good deal of truth in this statement. The eighteenth century was a time when there was not very much genuine religious feeling or enthusiasm for any worthy or unselfish cause. It is difficult to imagine the nicely powdered ladies and gentlemen who spent their time at Bath or Tunbridge Wells getting really earnest about anything but their own personal

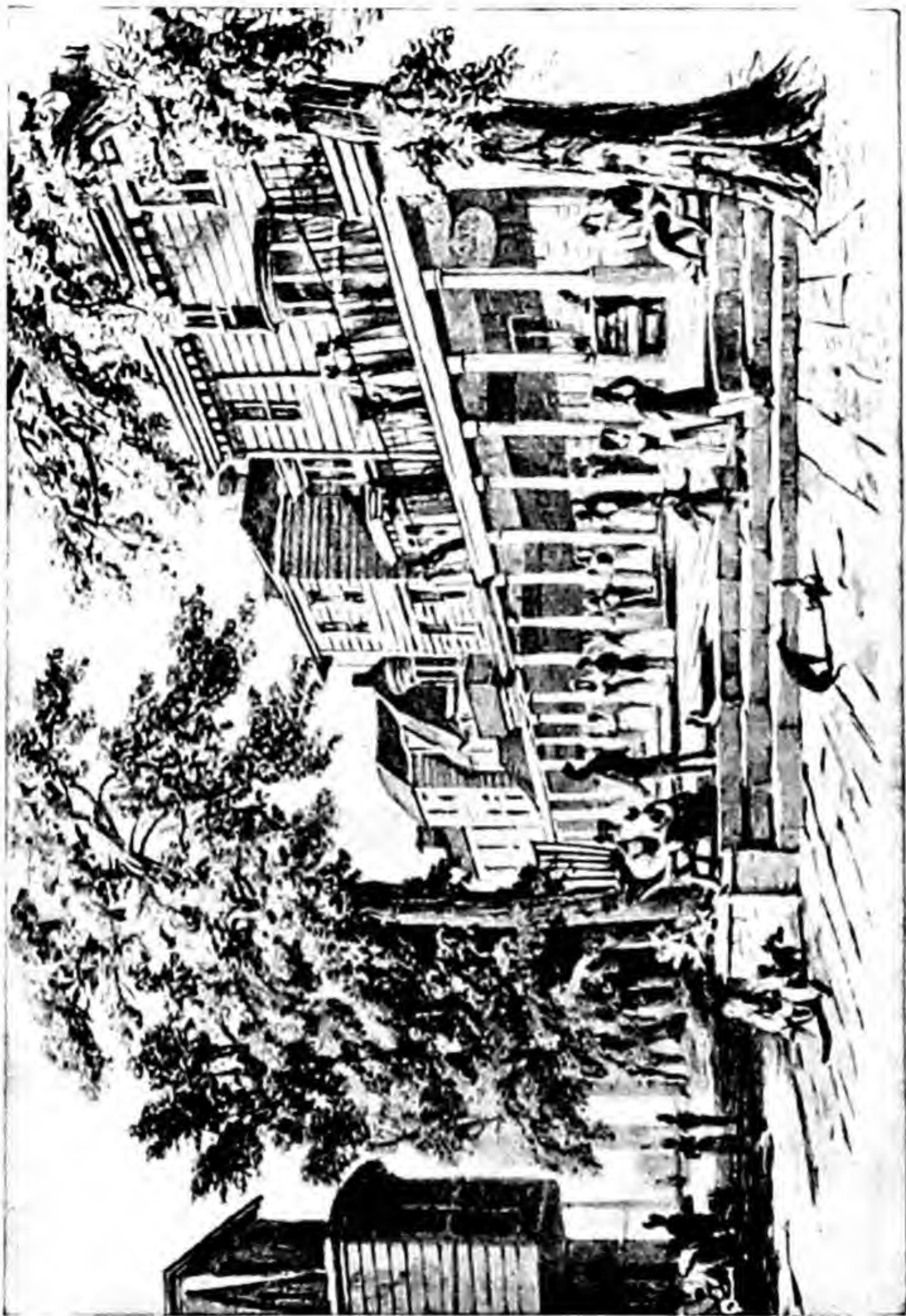


" A modern belle going to the rooms at Bath " (1796).
(Gillray Caricature.)

comfort and advancement. It was an age when brutal things happened—in the streets, in the slums, in the factories and mines, and even in the unhealthy servants' basements of the fine houses—but nobody cared very much. In novels like *The Vicar of Wakefield* and *Evelina* we get no idea of the sad condition of the poor, which we have described. We read rather of a cheerful country life, where the clergyman and squire are pleasant sporting gentlemen, who have little concern with the affairs of the people for whom a few men like Cobbett and Place began to work in the early part of the following century.

The nineteenth century saw a very different state of things arise. Nowadays, if you are interested in some special cause—whether it be the care of the blind, or kindness to animals, or the protection of the country-side, or whatever it may be—you will be almost sure to find some society or association which you can join, and which is working for that particular object. There are thousands of these societies and charities to which people subscribe money, and which carry on their work by means of meetings and reports, and letters in the newspapers, and all kinds of other methods by which they get people interested and help on their work. These societies do very useful social work. They keep us up to the mark by not letting us forget that there are wrongs which have still got to be put right.

Now in the eighteenth century such societies did not exist. It seldom occurred to rich people to give money to improve the condition of people less fortunate than themselves, though many of the great hospitals—such as the London and the Middlesex—were



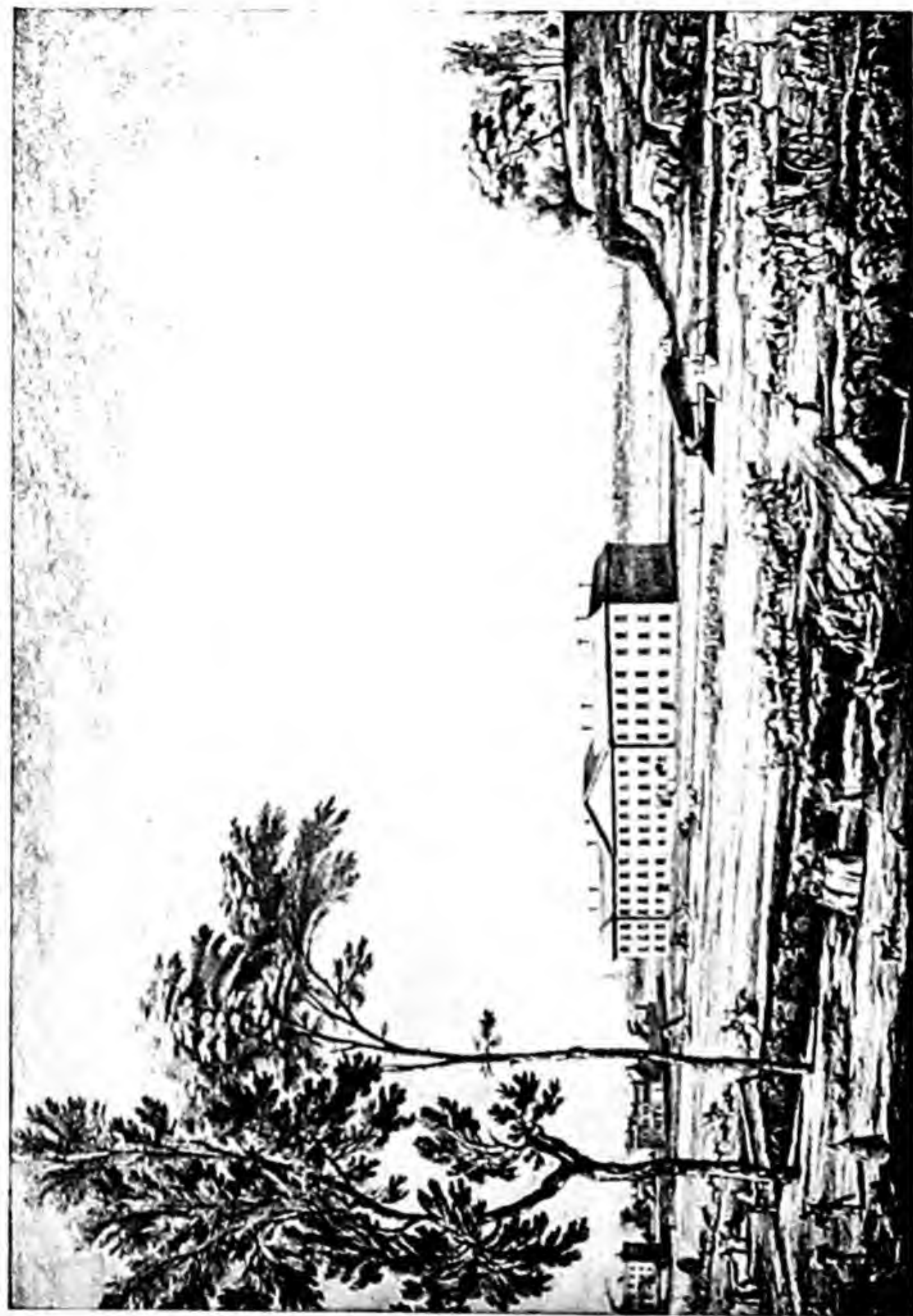
Tunbridge Wells (the Pantiles) in the eighteenth century.
(From a contemporary print.)

founded in the middle of the eighteenth century, and a few had been set up much earlier, while many people had founded almshouses for the aged poor. But it was the middle of the nineteenth century which saw the great spread of *philanthropy*—the root meaning of which is the love of one's fellow-men. We saw how the Government of the country kept to the policy of "Let things alone." But this policy sometimes broke down, and it usually broke down because some man, or body of men, wanted a reform so badly that they forced the Government to act.

Let us now consider some of the important movements in the first half of the nineteenth century which stirred people's consciences, and sometimes forced the State to throw overboard its policy of *laissez faire*.

A very noteworthy movement for a reform long overdue was the Anti-Slavery campaign, which began before the French Revolution and ended in 1833. The leaders of this movement were Granville Sharp, Thomas Clarkson, and William Wilberforce. The name of William Wilberforce (1759-1833) is the one best known to us because he was a member of Parliament and a friend of Pitt's, and he stirred the House of Commons again and again by his earnestness and eloquence. Wilberforce was a wealthy man who became very devoutly religious when quite young. He had hosts of friends, a charming manner, and a very beautiful voice, but he did not choose a life of pleasure and ease. He worked hard all his life for the good of others, and especially for the cause of the negro slaves about whose sufferings he had heard in his boyhood.

The slave-owners of the British West Indies and



London Hospital (about 1753).
(From a contemporary print in the Grace Collection.)

the British slave-traders who shipped negroes from Africa to America under terrible conditions were rich, and some of those interested in this trade had much influence in Parliament. Wilberforce was a member of the Tory party, which was at that time more friendly to reform than the Whigs, but his friends were mostly Quakers, Dissenters, and Radicals. The Anti-Slavery Society worked hard all over the country, gathering in members and money, but it took Wilberforce twenty years to get a Bill passed abolishing the carrying of slaves in English ships. He was constantly beaten, either by the House of Commons or the House of Lords, or by people who wanted to put the Bill off a little longer. But in 1807 the Bill for abolishing this slave trade was passed. It was not, however, until 1833, just before the death of Wilberforce, that the Anti-Slavery Society finally triumphed, and a Bill was passed abolishing slavery itself in all British territories.

If it had not been for the efforts of these few men and of the society they founded, that blot on Britain's fair fame would have existed much longer. Wilberforce himself is a very good example of a man with a passion for "doing good," and there were many others in his time. He was a sort of fairy godfather to a large number of societies, and under his roof were collected all sorts of benevolent persons. In his library, we are told, there were gathered "ladies anxious to explain their plans of visiting the sick, Quakers under a concern for transported convicts, the founders of savings banks, missionaries from Serampore and the Red River. . . ."

From the time of Wilberforce we can date many "causes"—spreading the knowledge of the Bible,

supporting missionary societies, giving soup and tracts to the poor, and countless other "acts of mercy." Many of these schemes now seem very old-fashioned, but we must remember that they stood for a real and a new desire to help others, and so take a part in the advancement of true civilization. Wilberforce himself will always stand out as a great example of Christian charity.



Lord Shaftesbury.

Another outstanding social reformer was Lord Shaftesbury (1801-85), about whom we have already read something. Lord Shaftesbury, a Tory squire of Dorsetshire, was a very great contrast to Wilberforce. He was never well off; he was reserved and shy and melancholy, with few friends of his own class. Both Wilberforce and Shaftesbury were deeply religious men, and both devoted their lives to the relief of the poor and suffering. But while Wilberforce, with his charm

and gaiety, looked on and organized the work of others, Shaftesbury plunged right into the midst of the horrors of poverty and crime, and the suffering that he saw made him a sad and gloomy man. When he was still known as Lord Ashley he moved a Bill for the protection of factory children, the little "slaves" whom Wilberforce had forgotten. This was in 1833, the year of Wilberforce's death. One great reformer, therefore, followed directly on the other.

The first and best years of Shaftesbury's life were devoted to the cause of the children in factories and in mines, and to the little "climbing boys" who were apprenticed to chimney-sweeps and were driven up narrow chimneys in which many of them were burnt to death or suffocated. He had to meet with opposition in Parliament from those who believed in freedom for the employer. Among these were Cobden and Bright, the great Corn Law reformers. But so eloquent and earnest was Lord Shaftesbury that even Cobden said, after hearing his moving description of the children in the mines: "You know how opposed I have been to your views, but I don't think I have ever been put into such a frame of mind in the whole course of my life as I have been by your speech."

We saw how Parliament was at last induced to pass the Factory Act of 1833, or the "Children's Charter," and the Mines Act of 1842.* The next step was the "Ten Hours Act" of 1847, which prevented women, and boys and girls under eighteen, from working more than ten hours a day, and as the work of the factory could not be carried on without men, their working hours also were usually limited to the same period. The passing of this Act was due very largely to Shaftesbury's efforts, but it was actually introduced by a cotton-spinner named Fielden, a large-hearted manufacturer who preferred to face ruin rather than spoil the lives of little children.



A "climbing boy."

* See page 128.

When Shaftesbury's work for the factory children was over he threw himself into every kind of good cause. He "visited cellars, garrets, gin palaces, beer-houses, gaming-houses, and every resort of vice and violence" because he longed to get into touch with the poorest of the poor and to know how they lived. One of his efforts was to help to found "Ragged Schools" for very poor children, whose sleeping-places were often under archways, in sheds or carts, or common lodging-houses. Shaftesbury was not content to help the poor with a sermon or a tract. He helped many to learn a trade or to emigrate, and was not afraid of mixing with the very lowest. One meeting that he held to discuss emigration consisted of 400 men, all of whom had been in prison.

By the time the forties came, the "let-it-alone" idea began to get weaker, and Parliament passed several laws which aimed at improving the condition of the people. One of these was an Act for the better care and treatment of lunatics, and it was known as Shaftesbury's Act. Shaftesbury himself was one of the Commissioners in Lunacy set up under an earlier Act, and he worked as hard at this task as he did at all others, because he had such deep sympathy for the poor, diseased people who were sometimes shamefully ill-treated. "Beyond the circle of my own Commissioners," he said, "and the lunatics that I visit, not a soul, in great or small life, not even my associates in philanthropy, had any notion of the years of trial and care that, under God, I have bestowed on this melancholy and awful question."

Another important law passed in the forties was the Public Health Act of 1848, which gave powers to

a Board of Health to improve sanitary conditions, drainage, and water supply where these were very bad. Shaftesbury was interested in this question, and also in housing reform, from his experience in the slums, and he was one of the members of the Board of Health. On all these questions he did much to rouse public opinion, and when he died he left a very different England—a much more gentle and charitable England—than the one into which he was born.

Lord Shaftesbury was one of the great Tory landowners,* and he shared some of their old prejudices. He spent his life in softening some of the miseries of the Industrial Revolution, but he did not aim, as Owen did, at building up a new society on quite different lines from the old. There was, however, in the middle of the century a body of men called Christian Socialists who tried to improve the lot of the workers by altering the whole system under which they were living.

The Christian Socialists were a body of men, clergymen, barristers and others, who determined to devote themselves to the task of bringing Christianity into the world of industry. "Masters," said one of them, "shall be leaders of *men*, not employers of *hands*, and shall marshal the thickly-forming ranks on their advance to accomplish . . . the glorious task of doing the will of God on earth, by asserting in deeds, and not alone in words, the brotherhood of mankind."

This company of men worked together so long and

* But not necessarily wealthy. His father had been wasteful, and Shaftesbury himself had neglected his own estates in his efforts for social reform, so he really had considerable difficulty in keeping things going.

so loyally that their names are all worthy of a place of honour, but we can only mention the three most famous—Frederick Denison Maurice, the leader of the movement ; Charles Kingsley, the country clergyman who wrote novels and articles describing the conditions of the poor ; and Thomas (Tom) Hughes, the author of *Tom Brown's Schooldays*. The Christian Socialists were not members of Parliament, and they did not work with any political party. Their chief aim was to make all industry a "working together" instead of a tug-of-war between employers and employed. They were not nearly strong enough to do very much in a practical way, but they did manage to start a number of Co-operative Associations in which a number of workers joined together to own their workroom and make and sell their own work. Some of these associations were quite successful for a time, and the Christian Socialists formed a big Co-operative Congress which included the Co-operative stores and workrooms of all kinds.

But this Christian Socialist movement was important not so much for what it actually achieved as for the spirit in which its members worked. The Christian Socialists fought against the idea of *laissez faire*, and they aimed at giving the workers self-respect and independence. Just as Lord Shaftesbury had spent his life in defence of the "bottom dog," so the Christian Socialists gave their time, and in some cases their fortunes, to the cause of the artisan—the skilled worker, who was the backbone of the whole system of industry. Naturally the Christian Socialists worked with the newly developing Trade-Unions, and especially with members of the Engineers' Society. One

of their most useful works was the foundation of the Working Men's College in Red Lion Square in 1854, now established at Crowndale Road, St. Pancras. This College did not set out, like the Mechanics' Institutes, to teach trades or scientific subjects. Its students were mainly artisans, and they had lectures and classes on literature, languages, law, mathematics, art, Bible study, and many other subjects. The aim of the College was to foster brotherhood and friendship, and widen the intellectual outlook of the workers, and in this way it not only had a great influence on the Trade-Unions, but it was also the forerunner of many settlements and missions which were set up in later years.



John Wesley.

You will have noticed that all these reformers were deeply religious men. The nineteenth century, in spite of all its very imperfect factory system and its straining after material wealth, did at least bring in its train a revival of religion. This started with Wesley and the Methodists in the eighteenth century, and it spread in what is called the Evangelical movement, to which Wilberforce and Lord Shaftesbury belonged. Even in 1798 Cobbett wrote: "It was a wonder to the lower orders, throughout all parts of England, to see the avenues to the churches filled with carriages. This novel appearance prompted the simple country people to inquire what was the matter?" The

"Evangelicals" broke away from the attitude of the eighteenth-century fox-hunting parsons, who did not care enough about religion. They tried to encourage Bible study, preaching, and "good works." They were very keen about foreign missions, and they set up Sunday Schools. This enthusiasm for the work of the Church also led to enthusiasm for social reform,



Charles Kingsley.

and although it took the Church a long time to realize that slavery really existed in the factories and slums as it did in the sugar or cotton plantations, in the end the Evangelicals produced Lord Shaftesbury, the "Wiiberforce of the whites."

At the beginning of this chapter we spoke of the dignified, reasoned literature of the eighteenth century. We cannot close it without referring to the great men in literature who spoke out

for freedom and humanity at the time of which we are now writing. The poets—Wordsworth, Southey, Coleridge, Shelley, Keats, Byron, and many others—all wrote in praise of freedom, whether of the small nations or of the negro slave or of the downtrodden workers. In 1843, just before the Ten Hours Bill was brought in, Mrs. Browning wrote "The Cry of the Children," a poem which doubtless gained many votes for industrial reforms.

The novelists were not far behind. Greatest of

all was Charles Dickens, who wrote *Hard Times*, *Oliver Twist*, *Bleak House*, and other books showing the miseries of the poor and the conditions under which they lived in the cities. Charles Reade and Charles Kingsley were two more novelists who pleaded the cause of the poor.

Another novelist was Benjamin Disraeli, who later became Prime Minister. He was one of a group of young members of the Tory party who were getting tired of doing nothing and who wanted to help and understand their poorer neighbours. They were known as the "Young England" party, and to show what ideas he entertained Disraeli wrote, in 1845, the novel called *Sybil, or the Two Nations*. This book describes very well the conditions of the poor at that time. "The Queen," says one of the characters, "rules over two nations, between whom there is no intercourse and no sympathy . . . who are formed by a different breeding, are fed by a different food, are ordered by different manners, and are not governed by the same laws." By these two nations Disraeli meant the Rich and the Poor, and the Young England party were anxious to bridge the gulf between them.

Two others, Thomas Carlyle and John Ruskin, thundered out denunciations against the industrial system and the policy of *laissez faire*. The influence



John Stuart Mill.

of Carlyle's *Past and Present*, and Ruskin's *Unto this Last*, was greater than has yet been fully realized.

The terms "Early Victorian" and "Mid-Victorian" are sometimes used nowadays as expressions meaning something heavy and dingy, and without any humour. But we must remember that whatever else the Victorian Age brought with it—unhealthy clothes, ugly houses and furniture, stuffy rooms, dull sermons and books—it had a watchword, the watchword of Humanity.

John Stuart Mill, a very noble prophet of liberty, who made economics a study of men rather than of money and goods, has some brave and cheering words to say: "All the great sources of human suffering are in a great degree, many of them entirely, conquerable by human care and effort." The politicians of *laissez faire* said "No" to this declaration, but the glory of the mid-Victorian age is that so many of the best and bravest Englishmen set out to prove the truth of Mill's words, and to show by their care and effort that much human suffering could be cured.

CHAPTER 12.—THE CARE OF THE DESTITUTE (1773-1834)

Problem of unemployment—Poor Laws of 1601, 1782, and 1834—Workhouses—Twentieth-century changes in the Poor Law—Howard and prison reform—The penal code—The police

“ That giant building, that high bounding wall,
Those bare-worn walks, that lofty thund’ring hall !
That large, loud clock, which tolls each dreaded hour,
Those gates and locks, and all those signs of power ;
It is a prison with a milder name,
Which few inhabit without dread or shame.”

G. CRABBE : *The Borough* (1810).

THE lines by the poet Crabbe which head this chapter describe very well the feelings most of us had when we saw a workhouse. We have spoken, so far, mostly about the “ workers ”—men, women, and children. But in every country there are a number of people without means to support themselves, who either cannot find work, or are too old or feeble to be able to work. These are the unemployed and the destitute. Because these people are poor and have no friends or relations willing to support them, they must be looked after by people in authority, not only for the sake of humanity but because if they were not looked after they would become a danger to the rest of the people. This chapter deals with this, the most unhappy section of the population—some of

them in distress through no fault of their own, and others perhaps because they have done wrong, for destitution often leads to law breaking for which there is sometimes a great deal of excuse.

Now in Queen Elizabeth's time "Let it alone" would have been considered quite the wrong policy; and we must also remember that life was much less complicated in those days. The Government thought it had a duty to look after everybody very carefully, and to make laws about trade and commerce and everything which affected the lives of the people. One of the most important laws of Queen Elizabeth was the Poor Law of 1601.

In those days the authorities made a distinction between those whom they called "idle and loitering persons and valiant beggars," and the "impotent, feeble, and lame, which are the poor in very deed." The vagabonds and beggars were punished or put to work, and it was the "poor in very deed" who were dealt with under the Poor Law. This law of 1601 laid down two very important principles: one was that every parish should look after its own poor, and the other that householders and landowners should be taxed to provide money for this purpose. This money was spent by "overseers of the poor," including the churchwardens and others appointed by the Justices of the Peace. Both these ideas—the responsibility of the parish, and the necessity for the collection of a "poor rate"—still survive, though the method of regarding them has changed with the times.

During the eighteenth century two great changes took place in connection with the relief of the poor. Firstly, the Government became much more slack,

and the Justices and overseers were left to their own devices, so that relief was often given for bad reasons, and the poor rate became very heavy. Secondly, laws were passed allowing parishes to join together and build workhouses, or to buy or rent buildings in which the poor could be housed and made to work. But there was one very difficult matter which had to be decided. What was to be done with the able-bodied men who could not get work? Were the workhouses to be kept for the old and the feeble, or were they also to take in the able-bodied and try to employ them there? The people of the eighteenth century kept on changing their minds about this question. At one time they insisted that everybody who applied for poor relief should go to the workhouse or get nothing. But in 1782 an Act, called Gilbert's Act, changed the system. This Act said that workhouses were only to be used for the aged and those unable to work, while the Justices of the Peace were to appoint salaried poor law guardians, who should provide work for the able-bodied unemployed.

The next step was taken when, as we have seen, the Justices of Speenhamland in 1795 decided to pay allowances out of the rates to all labourers who were unemployed or whose wages were too low for their maintenance. This system spread through the country, and instead of "indoor relief"—that is to say, relief given in the workhouse—the able-bodied and their families received "outdoor relief," or relief given to them in their homes. We read how the labourers nearly all became paupers, and many of the employers bankrupt because, although wages diminished almost to vanishing point, the rates were very largely in-

creased. As wages were paid or made up by the parish, the employers preferred to employ paupers. The labourers became cunning and "work-shy," because they could always draw their allowance even if they did no work at all. They were also prevented from moving elsewhere in search of work, because the law insisted that they must only draw relief from their own parish.



Captain Thomas Coram.

(See page 170.)

(From a painting by his friend,
W. Hogarth.)

In the beginning of the nineteenth century, then, the state of the poor was worse than ever. Almost every district had a different way of dealing with them. Sometimes the unemployed were auctioned every month or week to the highest bidder; sometimes they were harnessed like horses to the "parish cart," which was used for the carting work of the parish, or made to do other use-

less and degrading labour in gangs; often they were urged to go and beg in another parish in order that the poor rate of their own parish might be reduced.

Even as early as 1753 Fielding, the novelist, who was a London magistrate, thought that the poor rate was much too heavy and very badly applied, for although the ratepayers' contributions amounted to a

million pounds a year, many of the poor were living in hunger and wretchedness, and often begged or stole. "The sufferings indeed of the poor," he said, "are less known than their misdeeds, and therefore we are less apt to pity them. They starve, and freeze, and rot among themselves; but they beg, and steal, and rob among their betters. There is not a parish in the liberty of Westminster which doth not swarm all day with beggars and all night with thieves."

The people who were called "rogues and vagabonds and sturdy beggars" were dealt with under various Vagrancy Acts, by which they were sentenced to be imprisoned, and sometimes to be whipped. When the police force was founded in 1829, begging and drunkenness leading to disorderly behaviour were dealt with by the police, and no longer by the Poor Law.

One of the first Acts of the new Reformed Parliament was the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834. This is a very important Act, because it laid down the principles under which the poor have been treated right up to the present time. The Poor Law Amendment Act was based on the Report of a Commission of Inquiry. This Commission found that "the great source of abuse was the outdoor relief afforded to the able-bodied on their own account, or on that of their families, given either in kind or in money." The Commissioners thought that there should be two main principles governing poor relief. The first was that nobody should be better off as a pauper than as an independent worker, which meant that if the condition of the labourers was miserable, that of the paupers



View of the Foundling Hospital founded by Captain Thomas Coram (1749).
(From "*Memoranda of the Foundling Hospital*," by John Brownlow.)

must be made even more so.* The second principle was the one we have noticed before, that relief to the able-bodied should only be given in the workhouse.

The main ideas of the Report can be found in the Act of 1834. This Act set up three Poor Law Commissioners, who were to see that all parts of the country were treated alike. Under them were the Boards of Guardians in each district, who decided how relief should be given in individual cases. Parishes were combined into "Unions" to provide a workhouse, which was often called "the Union," and occasionally "the Bastille," because it looked very like a prison. The laws which prevented people from being relieved except in their own parish were abolished. Most important of all, the "workhouse test" came back. Any able-bodied man or woman asking for relief was offered the workhouse or nothing. Outdoor relief was only given to the old, or in cases of sickness or accident, or to children apprenticed to a trade.

This Act had a bad and a good side. The workers themselves hated it. It was passed at a time of great distress, and hundreds of people who had been getting relief for years were suddenly faced with a choice between starvation and the workhouse. The idea of "the House" was hateful to them. It was a dismal, ugly place, where the deserving and the undeserving poor were all treated alike, where husbands and wives

* This is expressly stated in the Report of the Commission of 1832-34 on the Administration of the Poor Law in the following words: "The first and most essential of all conditions . . . is that his (*i.e.* the able-bodied pauper's) situation, on the whole, shall not be made really or apparently so eligible as the situation of the independent labourer of the lowest class."



George Cruikshank

Oliver asking for more.
(From the famous drawing by George Cruikshank.)

were not allowed to be together, and where the strict rules and lack of comfort made life very depressing. The kind of workhouse described in *Oliver Twist*, which Dickens wrote in 1838, was much the same as the old poorhouse of which Crabbe wrote in 1810 :

“ 'Tis cheerless living in such bounded view,
With nothing dreadful, but with nothing new ;
Nothing to bring them joy, to make them weep.
The day itself is, like the night, asleep.”

The Poor Law seemed to the Chartists as bad as the Corn Laws and the Combination Acts. They looked upon it as a scheme of the employers to get cheap labour in the towns and to deprive the poor of the rights they had enjoyed since the Middle Ages. Certainly it must have seemed very harsh at that time. The Poor Law Commissioners were determined to make the workhouses as disagreeable as possible, so that nobody should be tempted to prefer living there to living in freedom. They were strong believers in *laissez faire*, and so they did not think out any plans for doing away with some of the causes of poverty. They did as little as possible, and they did not think very much about the old and infirm, and the women and children, who were in the workhouse through no fault of their own.

But there was also a good side to the Act, and that is why it remained in operation for such a long time. In 1831, just before the Act was passed, a writer could say : “ An English agricultural labourer and an English pauper, these words are synonymous. He pilfers when occasion offers, and teaches his children to lie and steal.” After the Act this terrible state of things became less and less common. The labourers

were no longer living on relief, but were earning their own living. Many of them travelled to the towns and to other parishes searching for work. The very fact that they hated the workhouse spurred them on to every possible effort to find work. Instead of a labourer and a pauper being usually one and the same, to be a pauper became a thing to be ashamed of.

As the nineteenth century advanced, the Poor Law became less harsh, and the twentieth century saw the passing of three measures which worked great changes in social life. One was the Act giving Old Age Pensions, which meant that thousands of old people were saved from going to the workhouse and were able to spend their last years in their own homes. A second was the Unemployment Insurance Act of 1920,* which gave benefit, or a weekly allowance, to the unemployed who had paid insurance money when they were working, their employers also making a contribution. This meant that able-bodied men and women out of a job were given, not a "dole," as it was wrongly called, but an allowance which they themselves had partly provided by their own contributions, and so were not obliged to go into the workhouse as destitute. A third Act was the Local Government Act of 1929, which abolished the Boards of Guardians and set up *Public Assistance Committees* of the County Councils to deal with all questions of relief, whether in workhouses or at home. This Act greatly improved the workhouse system, so that the sick were relieved in hospitals, the old and deserving in special homes, and

* There were earlier Unemployment Insurance Acts in 1911 and 1916, but this Act of 1920 extended the benefits (see page 257). The National Insurance Acts of 1948, however, have transformed the whole aspect of these social services.

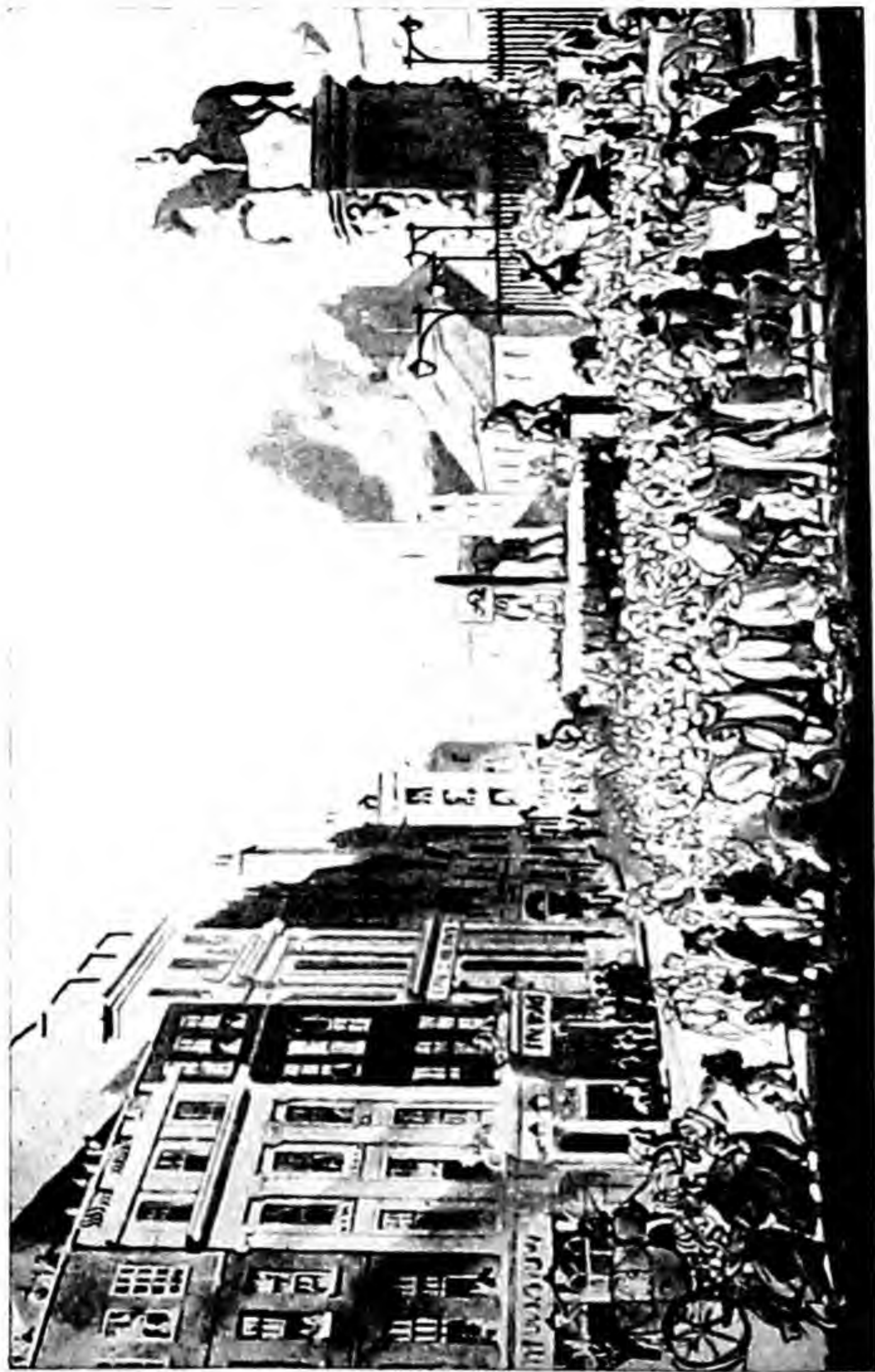
the infirm received special care, while the able-bodied were trained to become useful citizens.

The workhouse was still a forbidding and cheerless place, but it had few inmates compared with the number in the workhouse of early Victorian times. It had been cleared of many old people, of many children who were boarded out with families or sent to school, of many sick and infirm who were cared for in hospitals and infirmaries, and of most of the able-bodied men and women who could live on their unemployment benefit in their own homes.

We must now look very briefly at an even more unpleasant place than the workhouse—the prison. John Howard (1726–90), who began his work as a reformer in 1773, brought home to the Government how dreadful was the condition of the prisons. Howard in his youth was delicate, and consequently very careful about his health and his diet, but later, when he was a magistrate, he made it his duty to see for himself what the prisons to which he sent people were really like. He was shocked at what he found, and he spent the rest of his life visiting prisons, hospitals, workhouses, and pest-houses in England and all parts of the Continent. In England he found the prisons dark, overcrowded, poisonous dens, often with dungeons below in which prisoners were kept in chains. The prisoners had great difficulty in getting food and water. Many were almost naked, and their beds were made of dirty straw. Jail fever and other diseases were rife, and the prisons were haunts of drunkenness and vice.



John Howard.



The pillory at Charing Cross (1809).
(From a contemporary print in the Crace Collection.)

The terrible thing about this prison system was that most of the prisoners were either debtors, who in those days were sent to jail, or were waiting for their trial, and therefore might be innocent. People in those days were not so often sentenced to imprisonment. They were either sentenced to death—which was the penalty for the pickpocket and the sheep-stealer, the forger and many others—or they were sentenced to transportation overseas. The prisons were only supposed to be temporary lodgings, and often the prisoner's whole family would come with him, so that the children, too, lived under the same wretched conditions. The jailers were often very brutal, and sometimes insisted on large fees before they would release a prisoner, even when he had been acquitted. This was one abuse which Howard succeeded in getting removed.

Romilly, a great law reformer, said at the beginning of the nineteenth century that the "laws of England were written in blood." By this he meant that the sentences for breaking the laws of the land were very severe, and in most cases meant death or exile. In 1818 a boy of fourteen was sentenced to death for stealing a watch and two bank notes, and a man was transported for life for stealing a sixpenny handkerchief. In 1813 two boys of ten and twelve respectively were transported for seven years for stealing linen. In *Barnaby Rudge* Dickens refers to the case of a woman who was hanged for shop-lifting. There were hundreds of cases like this, and the prisons were full of people about to suffer terrible sentences for small crimes.

Transportation to the colonies was the magistrate's



Prison ships (1808).

"The prison ships . . . are stationed off the Tower of London, and are fitted up to receive impressed seamen for manning the navy; these vessels are called Tenders. . . . Instead of being what they were some years ago, the most loathsome and filthy prisons . . . [they] are now preserved clean and healthy; and every humane attention, that can tend to soothe the unfortunate prisoners, is administered by the persons who have them in charge."

(W. H. PYNNE: *The Costume of Great Britain*, 1808.)

favourite punishment for children as well as for men and women. Unfortunately it was just when Howard and his friends were trying to set up model prisons, in which prisoners could be made to work instead of being sent to the other end of the earth, that Captain Cook discovered Australia. Australia was a large new country, it was very far away, and it badly wanted labour to develop its land and trade. So for nearly a hundred years "convicts" were sent there, many of them being the most adventurous men and boys of the villages. The best of them were sent to work on farms and ranches, or in the towns; the worst were kept in convict settlements, working in gangs at road-making or any other hard labour, sometimes kept in irons and treated very cruelly by their overseers. As time went on the people of Australia began to complain about convicts being sent over to their country, and refused to have them any more. After 1840 no more convicts were sent to New South Wales, and in 1867 the system of shipping criminals abroad was discontinued.

This, of course, meant that room had to be found for prisoners at home. After Howard's death the prisons had again got into a very bad state. They were still dirty and overcrowded, and the prisoners were still underfed and herded together regardless of their character. It was about these prisons that Dickens wrote in *Little Dorrit* and other books, and his descriptions of prison life did a great deal to rouse people to reform it. The most active steps, however, were taken by the Quakers, who, just after the French wars, formed a Prison Discipline Society, the members of which, following in the steps of Howard, visited and

reported on the prisons. "All were in ill-health," they wrote, "almost all were in rags, almost all were filthy in the extreme." One of the Quakers of whom we have often heard was Elizabeth Fry, who already, in 1813, had begun visiting women prisoners. She succeeded in making their lot much better, especially in Newgate Jail, where the women's prison was said to be like a "den of wild beasts."

The terrible overcrowding of the prisons meant that more room must be found, and from the time of Elizabeth Fry onwards large new prisons were built, where the prisoners had separate cells which were kept clean and orderly. The old prisons were swept away, and in the latter part of the century the Government passed Prison Acts which recognized that it was the duty of the State to see that prisons were properly managed, and every effort made to render the prisoners better in both mind and body.



Sir Robert Peel.

One of the reasons why the magistrates were so very severe in the early nineteenth century, both on the poor and the criminals, was because there were no police to protect the public. There were a great number of highwaymen, burglars, and thieves about, and until Sir Robert Peel started his "peelers" in 1829 these ruffians found it fairly easy to "give the

slip " to the sleepy old watchmen. The police were started in London, and during the next thirty years the system spread all over the country. Punishments became less severe, and the country became much safer and more orderly. Another reason for this change was the great improvement in the roads and in methods of transport, and we shall speak of these in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 13.—TRAVEL BY LAND AND SEA (1750-1850)

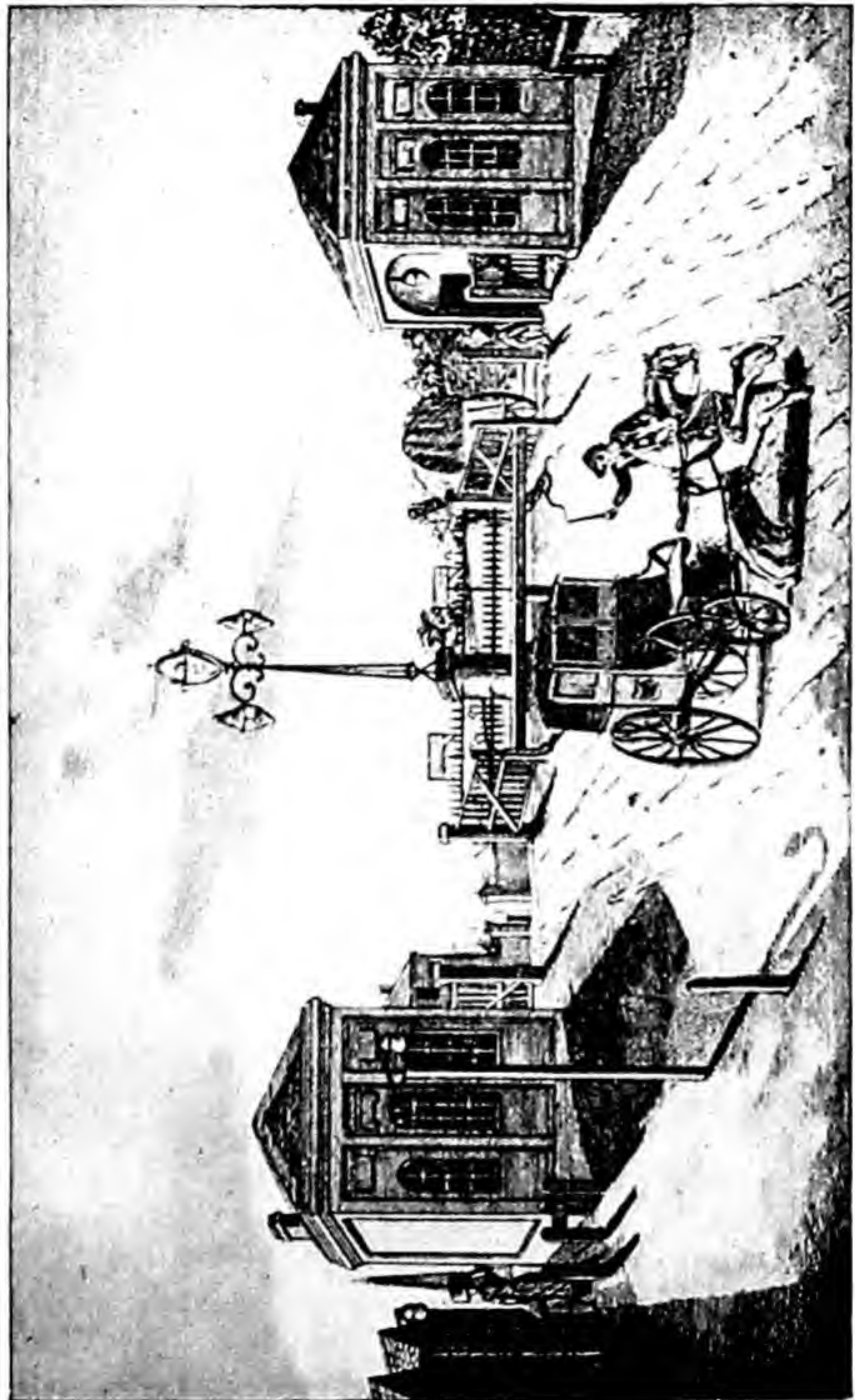
Roads in the eighteenth century—The coaching roads—Canals—Railways—Steamships—Results of the revolution in transport—The streets

" But now alike, gay widow, virgin, wife,
Ingenious to diversify dull life,
In coaches, chaises, caravans, and hoys,
Fly to the coast for daily, nightly joys,
And all, impatient of dry land, agree,
With one consent, to rush into the sea."

WILLIAM COWPER (1731-1800).

THE subject of transport, or the carrying of people and things from place to place, is very important in our history. Towards the end of the nineteenth century there were not only large factory towns all over the northern half of England, but also a growing system of well-made roads, canals, and railways, joining town to town and, above all, town to seaport. Round the coasts and across the oceans steamships large and small were carrying coal, wheat, meat, cotton, wool, and hundreds of other commodities.

In 1750 none of this web of transport was in existence, and we must now watch it being woven until it covered the whole country, and finally linked our island with the uttermost parts of the earth. Let us see, first of all, how these lines of transport developed



Hyde Park Turnpike (1792).
(From a contemporary print in the Grace Collection.)

during the time of the Industrial Revolution—roads, canals, railways, and shipping.

We saw in an earlier chapter how bad was the condition of the roads in the eighteenth century—how most of them were little more than tracks, ill-kept, little used, and frequented by highwaymen. Even towards the end of the century it took a week to travel from London to York. Coaches only started when their drivers felt inclined, and often waited a day or so until they had collected enough passengers to make the run pay. Many roads had never been repaired since the Romans left Britain, and were too bad even for carts, so that coal and pottery and other goods had often to be carried on the backs of ponies or donkeys as far as the seaports.

One plan for improving road transport was the turnpike system. A group of private people were sometimes allowed to build and keep in order a section of a road, and to repay themselves by levying tolls on those who used it. In the middle of the eighteenth century new "turnpikes," or gates for the collection of tolls, were set up in great numbers, although they became very unpopular. There are still a few of these toll-gates in existence. The "turnpike road" did a great deal to improve transport, and it was usually profitable to the company or trust which owned it, but the Government did nothing for the roads as a whole, and the parts that were not controlled by any trust were as bad as ever.

Towards the end of the century, when towns were growing quickly and the factories and mines were turning out goods faster and faster, it became absolutely necessary to make the roads better so that goods could

be carried to the coast quickly and safely. Three great road engineers then came to the fore—John Metcalfe, a blind man, who made roads, bridges, and



Thomas Telford.

(The background shows one of his bridges.)

embankments in the north ; Thomas Telford, a shepherd's son, who built bridges, and more than a thousand miles of roads ; and Macadam, who became a famous surveyor, and invented a method of improving the surface of roads, which was named after him.

By this time the General Post Office in London had decided to send its mails by special coaches, called mail-coaches, and therefore it gave a great deal of money towards building new roads and improving old ones. The first mail-coach from London to Bath started during 1784, and by the beginning of the nineteenth century the roads were so much better that the stage-coaches were able to run a regular service between the most important towns.

Even at the time when the poet William Cowper wrote (he died in 1800), families were beginning to go to the seaside by road. In the time of Jane Austen (1775-1817), stage and mail coaches, chaises and hackney coaches, were rumbling and bowling along the fine new roads at a speed of ten miles an hour or more. Comfortable coaching inns sprang up everywhere, and wagons were used instead of pack-horses. In the thirties the coaching roads were at their best and busiest, and the Government passed a Highways Act, allowing each parish to levy a rate and appoint a road surveyor to keep their own roads in proper order. But just as the roads were being improved and being used for every kind of transport, the railway era began, and after a time the roads were again neglected. Then, in our century, motor-cars were invented, and the roads began to be used again for transport. At the present time the railways are suffering from the competition of traffic on the roads, with their lorries and charabancs and private cars, and roads are still being improved and new ones made. But we are anticipating, and must consider the rise of the railway later in this chapter.

Before the time of railways it was very difficult

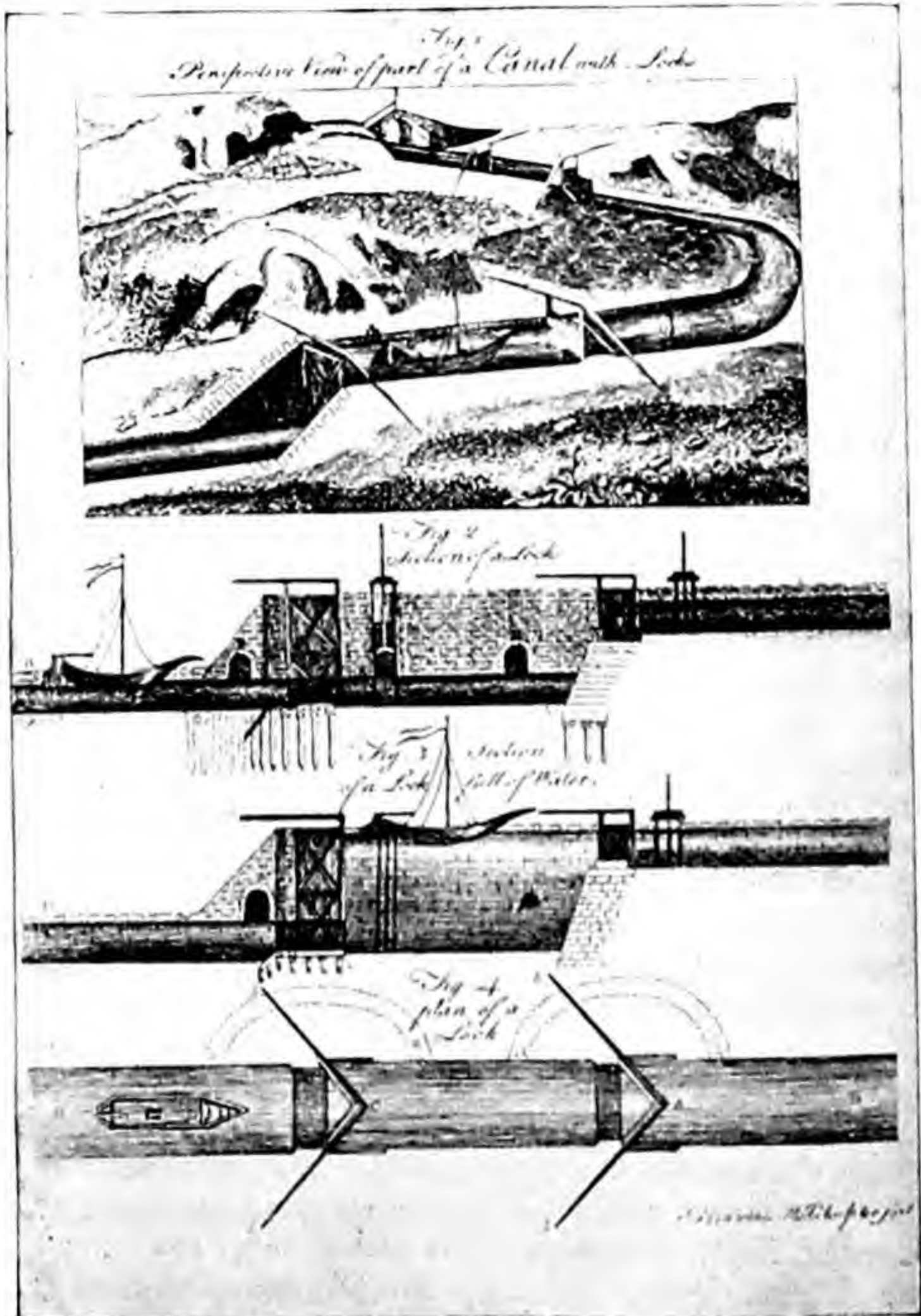
to get heavy loads carried from place to place. This was especially the case with coal, which was badly wanted by the factories and could only be sent in very small quantities by road. This difficulty was solved by the building of canals. The first canal built by the Duke of Bridgewater was opened in 1761, to carry coal from his colliery at Worsley to Manchester, a distance of forty-two miles; and soon afterwards he built another canal from Manchester to Liverpool. Others quickly followed his example, and at the end of the eighteenth century, and during the first part of the nineteenth, a kind of canal "fever" set in, and thousands of miles of canals were built.



The Duke of Bridgewater.

The growth of canals meant cheaper and quicker transport for heavy goods. It enabled ports like Liverpool to send goods all over England by water, and to receive goods to be shipped abroad. New ports and docks connected with the canals sprang up; so also did many towns in the Midlands, which could now get coal and food and timber easily and cheaply.

These changes in methods of transport led to the creation of new occupations. Men with samples and patterns of the goods they wanted to sell for their



View of locks, 1797.
 (Encyclopædia Britannica, 1797.)

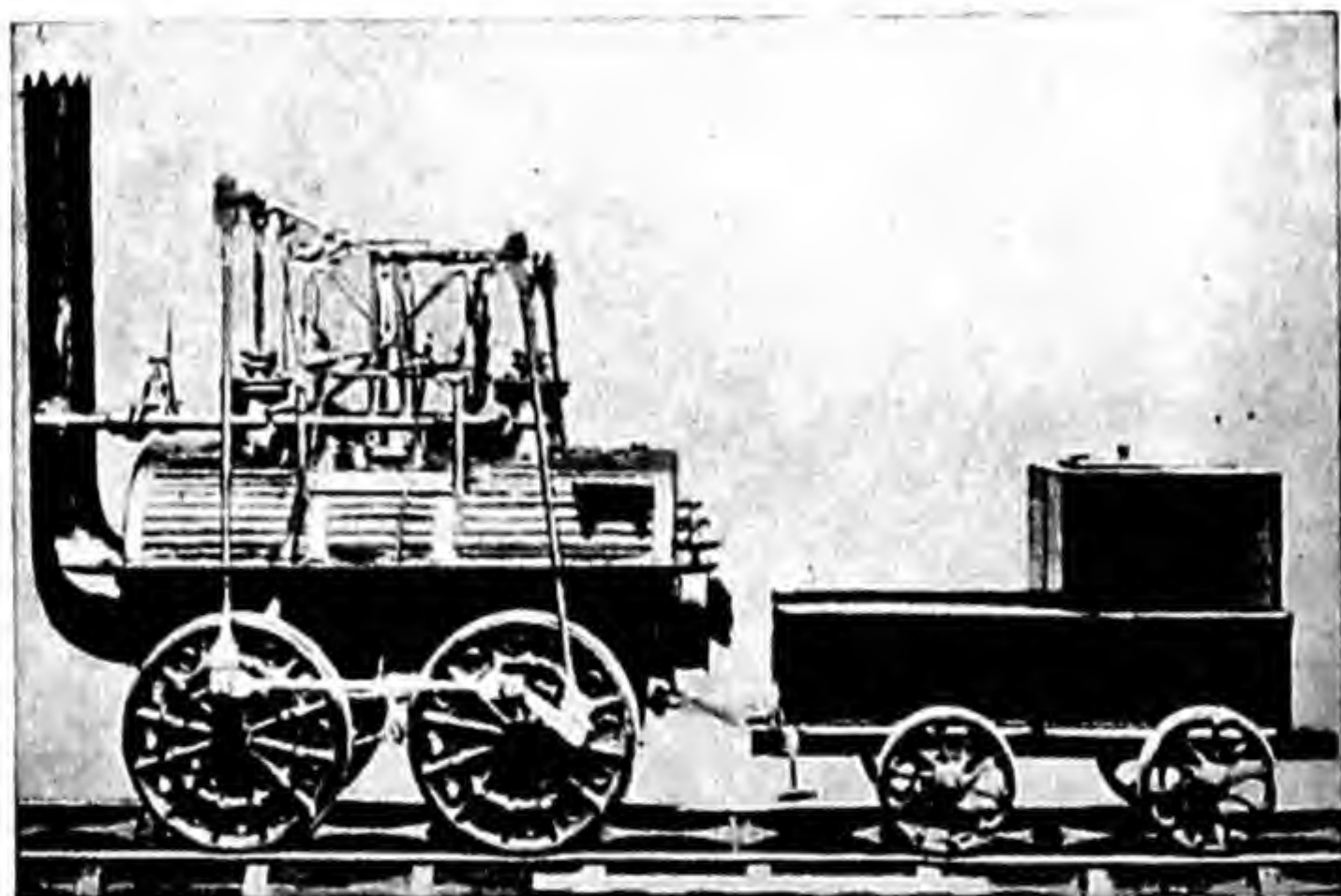
employers took orders from the shopkeepers and traders, and then sent the goods along by canal barges or by wagons. These men were the first commercial travellers, and superseded the merchants travelling on pack-horses and selling their goods as they went. Secondly came the "navvies." These were men who were employed in large numbers to dig the canals. They were given their name because they were working on what was called "inland navigation." Later, the men who built the railways and the roads were also called "navvies." Thirdly, we get the "bargees." These were the men who worked the canal barges, on which they lived with their families, so that their children grew up knowing little of life on dry land.

By about 1830 England was intersected by a network of canals, which had taken most of the heavy traffic away from the roads; but not long after 1830 they had to give a great deal of it back to the railways. Canals were safe and reliable, but they were slow. After the first quarter of the nineteenth century was over came transport that was really quick—by means of steam locomotives and steamships.

The great revolution in transport, which changed England almost as much as the coming of machinery, took place after the main Industrial Revolution. The factories were working steadily, the northern half of England was black with smoke, more and more goods were overloading the barges on the canals. It was time for a new invention.

Since the end of the eighteenth century railways had been used for trucks drawn by horses. These connected ironworks and collieries with canals, and quarries with towns. Several inventors experimented

with steam locomotives and carriages, but it was not until 1825 that the first steam railway was engineered by George Stephenson. This ran from Stockton to Darlington, and on it steam trains were used which carried passengers as well as goods. In 1830 the Liverpool and Manchester Railway was opened amid



"Locomotion," 1825.

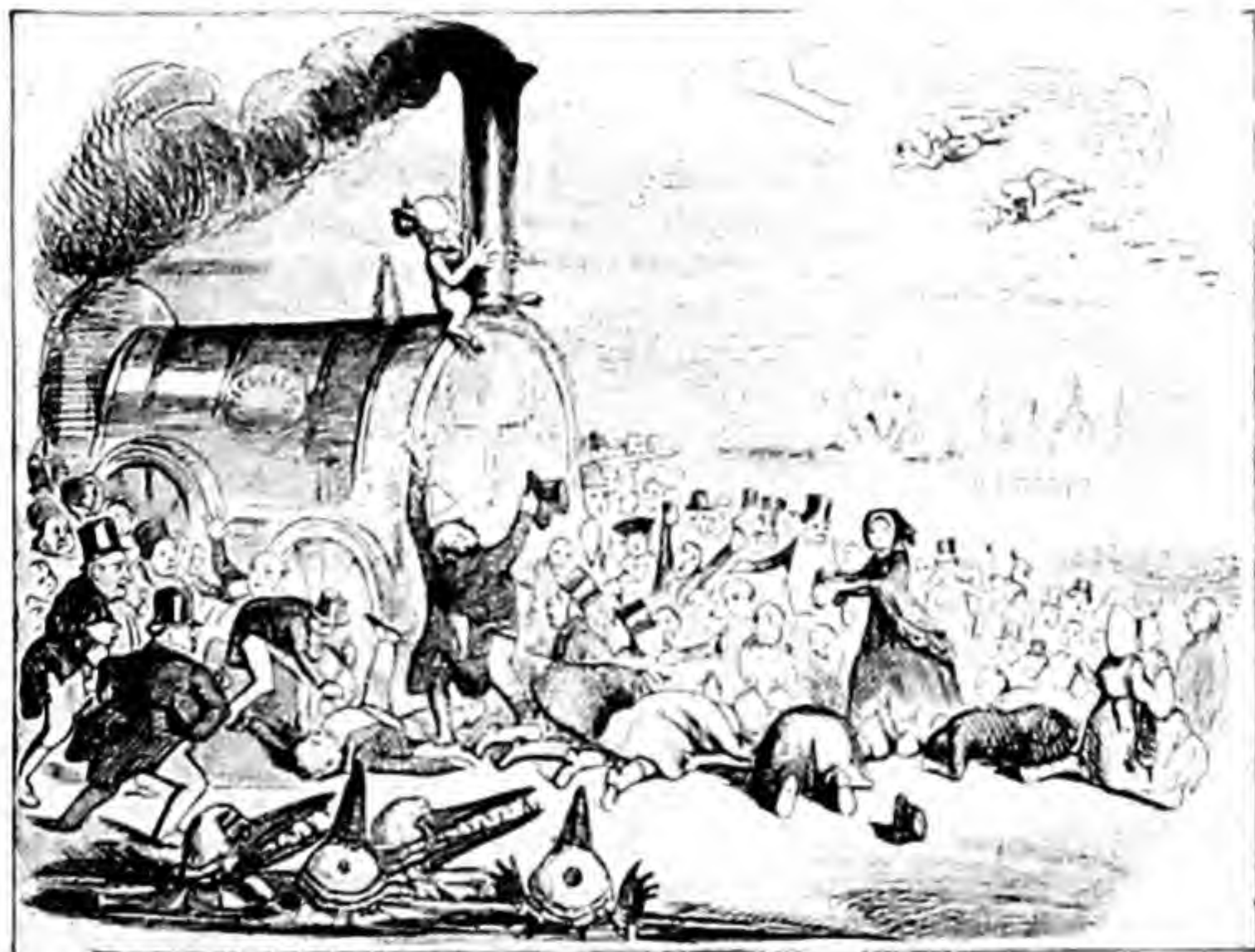
The first engine built for the Stockton and Darlington Railway by Messrs. R. Stephenson and Co. It ceased running in 1846.

(From a model in the Science Museum, London.)

great excitement. George Stephenson's engine, the "Rocket," had reached at least thirty miles an hour during its trial run in 1829, and from that date the triumph of railways was certain.

At first many people were very much afraid of these "iron roads," and objected to their noise and dirt, and some people with influence fought hard

against many of the proposals to build railways. In 1825, when some men wanted to build a railway to Woolwich, they promised that the trains would go at not more than twenty miles an hour. The *Quarterly Review* wrote: "We would as soon expect the people



"The Railway Juggernaut."

(*"Punch"* cartoon, 1845, ridiculing the railway mania of the period.)

of Woolwich to suffer themselves to be fired off upon a rocket as trust themselves to the mercy of such a machine, going at such a rate. We would back old Father Thames against the Woolwich Railway for any sum."

The poor people who travelled third class on these early trains did not get much fun out of it, for they had

to ride in open trucks, and were charged $1\frac{1}{2}d.$ a mile. In 1844 an Act was passed laying down that on every line there must be at least one train a day carrying passengers at $1d.$ a mile, and in covered carriages. These trains were for a long time called "Parliamentary trains," and that is what Gilbert means when he gives in the *Mikado* a "punishment to fit the crime":

"The idiot who in railway carriages
Scribbles on window panes
I only suffer to ride on a buffer
In Parliamentary trains."

Nowadays third-class passengers are by far the most profitable to the railway companies, and are carried in comfort.

The turnpikes, canals, and railways were all in the hands of companies of private people. The Government did not take steps to build a system of canals or railways with public money.

The old stage-coach was soon driven off the road by the railways. Goods, instead of being carted by wagon, were sent by railway trucks; people travelled quicker, more cheaply and comfortably by train than by coach or post-chaise, and many more of them could be carried. The great inns and the posting-stables, with their relays of horses and their busy ostlers, were deserted. It was sixty years before the main roads began to be busy again with travellers on bicycles and in motor-cars.

Another kind of transport entirely changed its character at the beginning of the nineteenth century, namely, shipping. Sailing ships, like the "tea clippers," were very beautiful and sometimes very swift, but they depended on favourable winds and were often

much delayed. In 1837 it took one ship ninety days to reach New York from Liverpool, and her passengers nearly died of starvation. A journey to India usually took six months, and as there was no system of cold storage the meat was all salted, and sometimes became very unwholesome.

After the Industrial Revolution Britain's commerce



Model of the *Comet* (1811).

The *Comet* was the first steamboat to run commercially in Europe.

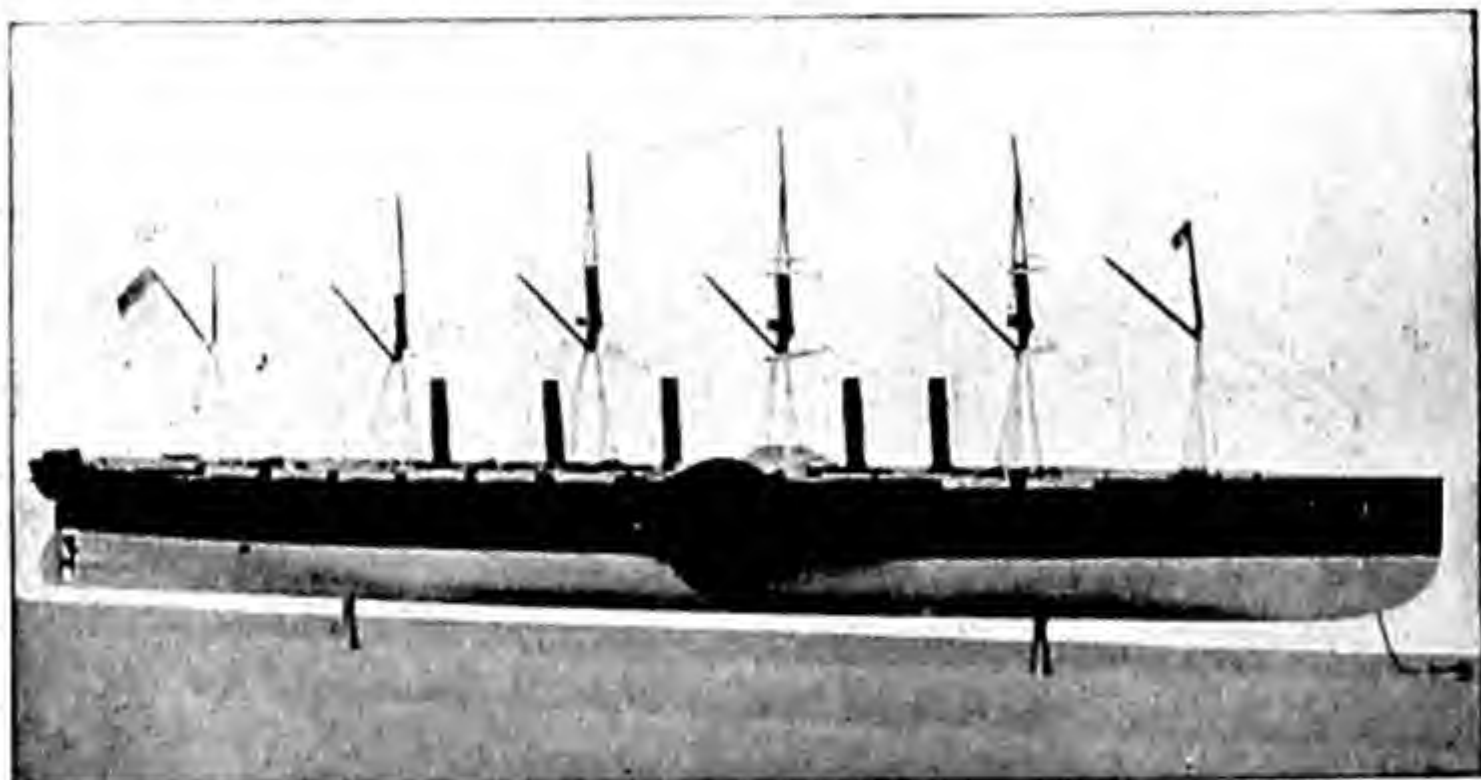
(*Science Museum, South Kensington.*)

with other countries grew so rapidly that it became most important to build ships which would travel quickly and to a regular time-table, and carry cargoes of any weight. The first steamboat was built in America in 1807, and in 1812 the *Comet* carried passengers regularly on the Clyde.

It was some time before these boats could rival a sailing boat in a fair wind. Even in 1835 a well-known doctor described a voyage by steamer from Liverpool to New York as "perfectly chimerical, as

much so as a voyage to the moon " ; yet this voyage was easily made three years later.

These early steamers were made of wood, but in the thirties two changes were made. Iron ships began to be built because they were stronger and lighter, and they were propelled by a screw instead of by paddles.



Model of the *Great Eastern*.

Built at Millwall in 1853-56, and until 1889-90, when she was broken up, she was the largest vessel afloat.

(*Science Museum, South Kensington.*)

Before long iron vessels began to be used by the Navy for battleships.

For a long time, however, there were many more sailing ships than steamers. Coaling stations in various ports were started in 1850, so that ships could be supplied with coal while on a voyage, and many improvements were made which rendered steamships very popular, especially when, in the seventies, they began to be made of steel, and were therefore lighter and lasted longer than iron ships.

Two kinds of steamships appeared about the middle of the nineteenth century—the liner and the tramp. The liner carried passengers and mails, and followed regular routes or “lines.” The tramp carried any kind of cargo, and journeyed anywhere. During the nineteenth century Great Britain became the greatest shipping and shipbuilding country. Her iron and coal fields and her great engineering works specially fitted her for building iron and steel ships with all their wonderful machinery. After 1860 steamers began to be used for every kind of water transport, and they linked up all parts of Britain’s great Empire.



An eighteenth-century lamplighter.

(W. H. PYNE : *The Costume of Great Britain*, 1808.)

Think of the eighteenth century with its storm - tossed sailing ships, its clumsy wagons and heavily laden pack-horses, its soft, muddy roads, its lumbering mail-coaches and horse-riders ; then think of the nineteenth century with its huge liners, its express trains, its acres of coal trucks, its miles of motor roads, canals, and railways. There could hardly be a greater contrast. What were the results of this tremendous revolution in transport ?

Firstly, it made it much easier to move goods about,



Road vehicles of 1804.
(W. H. PYNE: *Microcosm*, 1805-6.)

especially heavy and bulky things like coal, stone, bricks, clay, timber, grain, and machinery. At first the railways served the towns mainly, and therefore manufacturers built their factories in the towns so that they could get their materials easily and send off their goods by rail to their customers. Foodstuffs now came into the towns by rail, and it became much more easy to feed a very large population, so that towns grew bigger and bigger. There are more than eight millions of people living in London, and yet enough food to feed them all can be bought at the shops every day. You can easily see that it would be quite impossible to feed all these people if their food had to be brought in wagons or on pack-horses, or even by canal. Railways helped to make big cities.

Although it was still cheaper for factories to be built near their supplies of coal or iron, distance did not matter so much after railways were built, and factories were set up all over the country, some of them with their own little railway line connecting them with the main railway.

Secondly, the railways and steamships made it very much easier for people to move about. "You too well know," wrote some one in 1792, "that in winter, when the cheerless season of the year invites and requires society and good fellowship, the intercourse of neighbours cannot be kept up without imminent danger to life and limb." This was because the bad roads were almost impassable in winter time, and towns and villages were often quite isolated for months together, and had to preserve their food for the winter as there was no chance of getting fresh supplies by road. When the railways came, people were able to

visit each other in neighbouring towns, to go for holidays to the seaside resorts which quickly sprang up round the coast, and, if necessary, to go about the country looking for work. Hundreds of men, and women too, every year were able to emigrate to other countries, and many foreigners from Europe and the East travelled to this country and settled down.

Thirdly, these new kinds of transport made the work of government easier. Members of Parliament were able to travel quickly to and from their constituencies, and politicians were able to tour the country making speeches and explaining their policy to the people. Newspapers and letters were carried by train, so that news reached any part of Great Britain in less than a day. Even more important was the way in which, after a time, the railways and steamships linked up all parts of the Empire, and indeed of the world. Passenger liners went to and from Canada, Australia, and India, and many people were able for the first time to visit foreign countries both in Europe and beyond. The railways made it possible for settlers in new countries to live inland, where before they had only been able to live on the coast, and great regions like the Sudan, Rhodesia, Uganda, the Canadian prairies, and the Australian bush were opened up and developed.

A fourth result of the changes was the growth of two classes of people: the shopkeeper and the transport worker. As the old craftsmen died out shops increased in number, especially in the towns. When the railways began to be really useful, shopkeeping became very popular. There were now a great many more luxuries in use, owing to the cheap and quick way in which

they could be transported, and more and more people were wanted to buy and sell these goods. Things like tea and coffee, sugar, rice, currants, and oranges became much cheaper after the railways came into use, and even the poor were able to buy them sometimes.

The "transport and general workers," as they



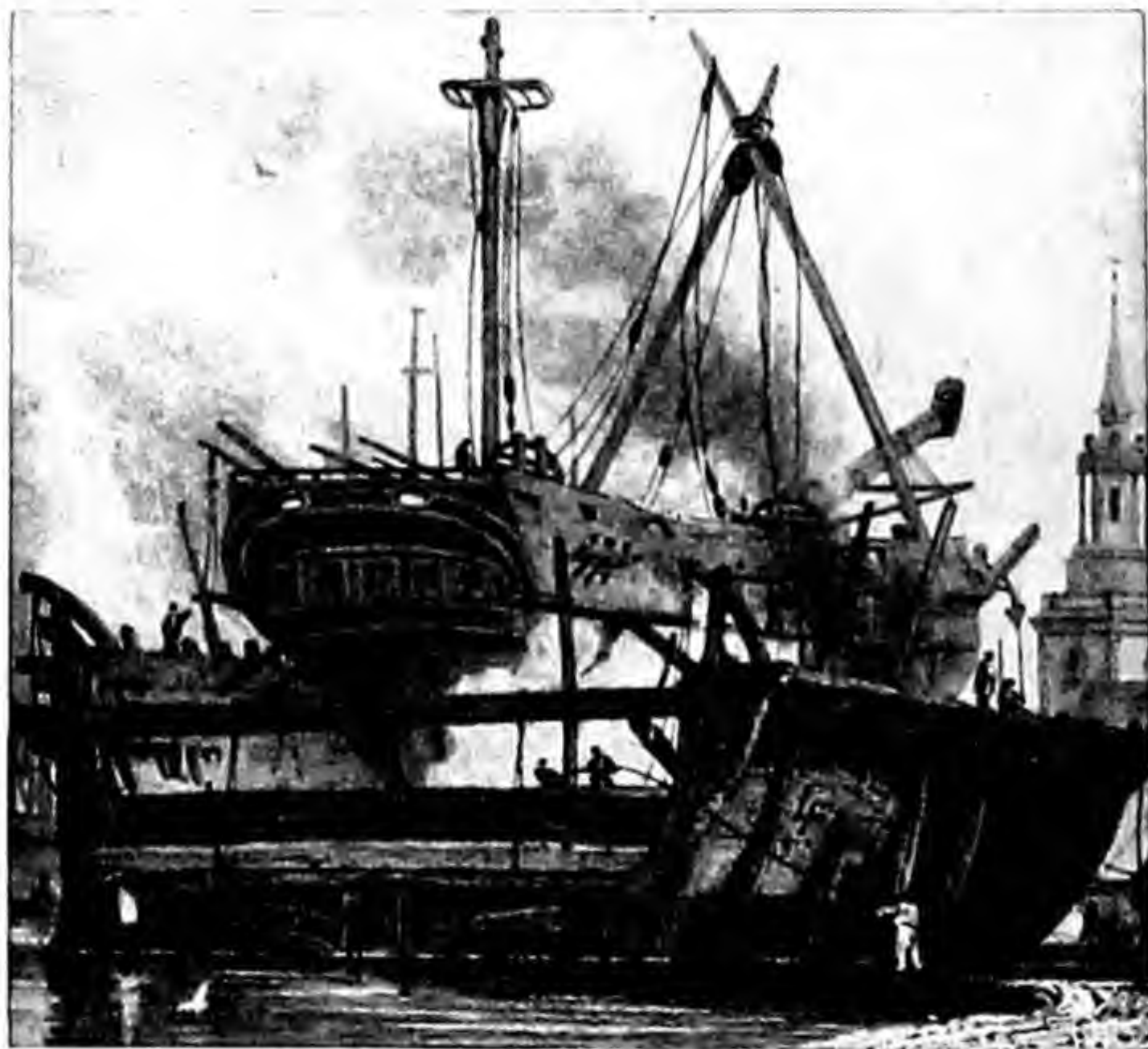
The original hansom cab.

came to be called, included navvies, plate-layers, drivers, guards, station-masters, stokers, carmen, bus conductors, and many others. These workers formed a very large class, and we shall see in a later chapter how important they became in the Trade-Union world.

We must not close this chapter without a glance at the streets in the middle of the nineteenth century. Early in the century oil and gas began to be used for lighting, and made the streets much lighter and safer at night. Later on, drain and water pipes, gas pipes,

telegraph and telephone wires were laid down under the streets.

Omnibuses with two or three horses abreast were started in 1829, and in 1836 came "hansom" cabs,



Early floating dock at Rotherhithe.

(By courtesy of Port of London Authority.)

drawn by one horse instead of two, as the heavy old "hackney" coaches had been. About thirty years later, when towns were growing larger and people found it more difficult to get from one part of a town to another, tramways were laid in many places.

The Industrial Revolution falls into two periods. The first period saw a change in the way things were made. It helped factories to pile up stores of goods, and mines to produce thousands of tons of coal which the existing roads and canals and sailing ships could not cope with.

The second period saw a change in the way things were carried. It opened up to the manufacturer and the shopkeeper the whole of this country and the Empire, and gradually gave them customers all over the world. Britain began to build engines, railway coaches and railway lines, ships and dockyards. This meant that the metal and engineering trades became almost as important as the textile trades had been fifty years before. England, in the middle of the nineteenth century, was supreme in all these—in textiles, metal and engineering trades, in mining and shipbuilding. She became the world's workshop and the world's carrier too, and that is why British industry in Queen Victoria's time was so far ahead of all its rivals.

II.—PROGRESS (1867-1914)

CHAPTER 14.—INDUSTRY AND COMMERCE (1867-1914)

Reform Act of 1867—British commerce and Free Trade—
New industries—Joint-stock companies—Trusts and
combines—Banking—Shopkeeping—Causes of trade su-
premacy—The British Empire—Events affecting trade—
Neglect of agriculture—Characteristics of the age

“ Those haughty shopkeepers, who sternly dealt
Their goods and edicts out from pole to pole,
And made the very billows pay them toll.”

BYRON : *Don Juan* (1823).

THE passing of the Second Reform Act of 1867 was one of the chief events which mark the beginning of modern Britain.

The Chartists, you will remember, made “ a vote for every grown-up person ” one of the points of their Charter, and although Chartism itself died out in the middle of the century its ideas did not die. The First Reform Act of 1832 had given a vote to people who had comfortable houses and a comfortable income, but it had left out the largest part of the nation—the working classes. One of the chief leaders of the agitation for a new and more far-reaching Reform Act was John Bright, the great Corn Law repealer. In 1866 William Ewart Gladstone, the Whig or Liberal statesman, brought in a Reform Bill which was de-

feated, and it was then that Benjamin Disraeli, the Conservative who had written in *Sybil* about the sufferings of the working classes, brought in the Second Reform Bill, which was passed in 1867. This Act gave the vote to all householders who lived in towns, and to a great many people who lived in lodgings. It



Benjamin Disraeli.

meant that for the first time in history the workman had a say as to who should sit in Parliament ; and as there were many more workmen in the country than any other class, this was a very great change. The Act was called at the time "a leap in the dark," because many people were very much afraid of what might happen when the working classes got the vote and thus shared in the government of the country.

Nearly all the important happenings of the last part of the nineteenth century—the growth of the Trade-Unions and the rise of the Labour Party, the passing of laws which aimed at improving the condition of the people, the spread of education, and the growth of local government—were due in the first place to the Reform Act of 1867. Before that time the workers were “outsiders.” When they wanted anything they had to organize meetings and processions, or even riots, in the hope of getting the ear of some friendly members of Parliament. Their history is written in the records of the Chartist movement and the early Trade-Unions, and in the reports of Commissions which inquired into the factories and mines. But after 1867 the working men not only voted at elections but some of them were in time elected as members of Parliament. In fact, all the members who represented the towns relied on the votes of working men, and so some of the laws which were passed were such as would benefit the working classes.

It would have been quite impossible after 1867 for the “Let it alone” policy to continue. The working-class voter would never have allowed it, and that is why this section of our book is entitled “Progress.” Parliament became a very different place, because at the back of it, urging it along, were millions of those who had struggled and suffered, and they said: “We have elected you to fight our battles and to make a better Britain. We do not want you to ‘leave us alone,’ but to give us better education, better wages, better conditions of work, better houses, and a hundred other things. We want progress.”

This was how matters stood at the beginning of the

period between 1867 and 1914. In this chapter it will be seen how Britain was fitted to deal with the great task of social reform ahead of her. What was her commerce like, her factories, her shops, and her agriculture? This is what we mean when we inquire about the material prosperity of a country upon which all social betterment must depend.

Let us consider first Britain's commerce with other countries. Her foreign trade steadily improved after



A Canadian prairie.

the wars with Napoleon. There is a well-known saying that "Imports and exports pay for each other," which, when applied to ourselves, means that when Britain buys goods from other countries she must pay for them by providing goods and services to the same amount. There were three important reasons for the great increase in foreign trade during the nineteenth century. The first was that our factories and mines were growing busier and busier, and we were able to send more and more goods abroad and so to get more from abroad. The second was that a great many new countries had by 1867 been opened

up. Most important of these was Australia, which, with her huge sheep ranches, supplied us at first with wool, and later with frozen mutton. There were also the prairie lands of Canada, and the interior of Africa, which was developed at the end of the century. A



A typical scene of a present-day Australian sheep station.
(Commonwealth Government photo.)

third reason was the number of new kinds of food that we were importing. When steamers were able to make quick voyages, live cattle could be brought over from Canada. In the eighties cold storage made it possible for us to import frozen meat and butter, which came especially from South America and New

Zealand, and we also developed a huge trade in tinned foods—fruit and vegetables, and fish and meat.

After the middle of the century, the kind of cargo that British ships carried was entirely changed. Instead of being an agricultural country sending corn and wool away, she had become a country of factories and mines and engineering works, with a population far larger than she could feed herself. She was obliged to import most of her wheat and meat and other food-stuffs, and she paid for these by exporting her manufactures and her coal. She also had to import most of the raw materials used in her factories, especially wool and cotton. The only raw material which she was able to send abroad was coal ; she had plenty of coal both for her own needs and for those of other countries.

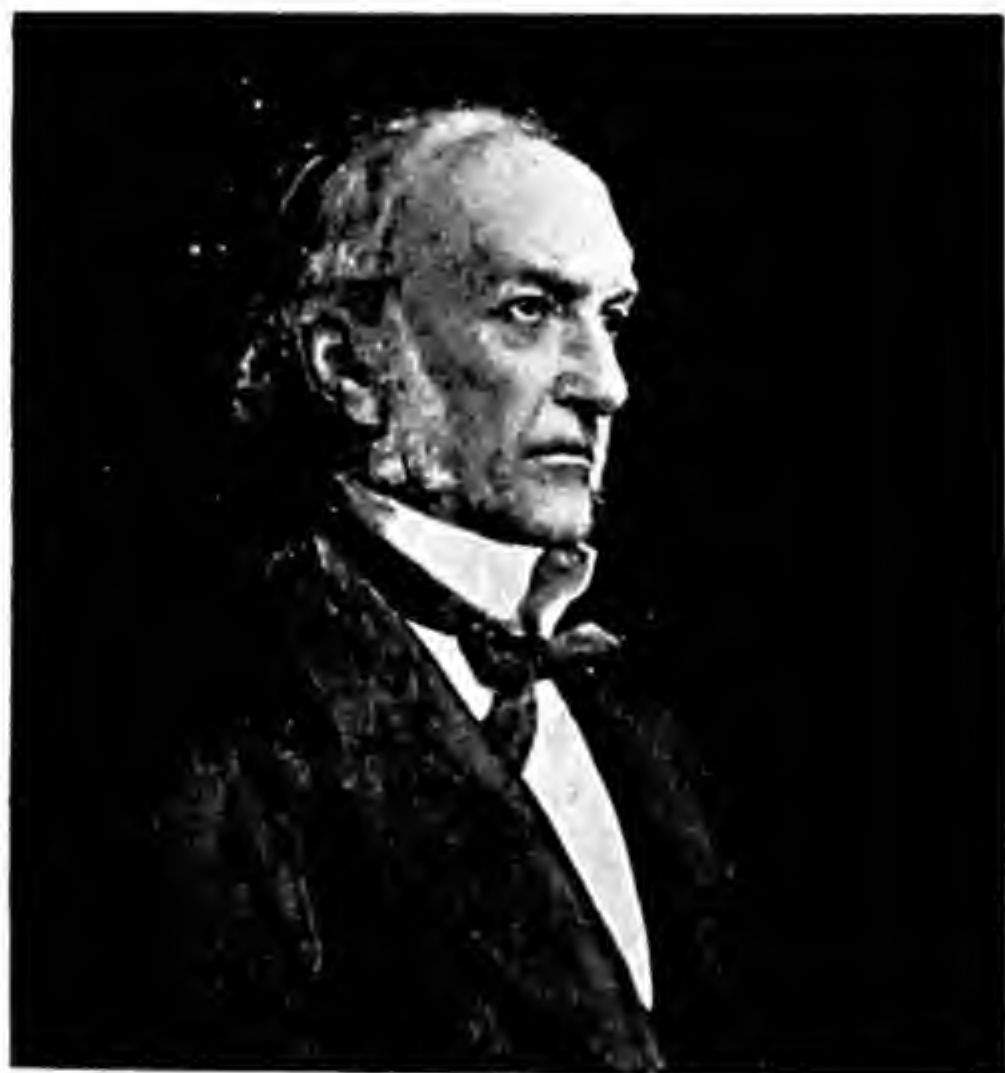
Our foreign commerce was very prosperous, and, as we saw in an earlier chapter, it was governed in the latter half of the century by the policy of Free Trade. The repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846,* which gave the people cheap bread, was a triumph for the policy of Free Trade. Under this policy nearly all the duties on food imports were taken off. Gladstone was one of the leading statesmen of the time, and in his Budgets, especially those of 1853 and 1860, he removed nearly all the duties which were paid to “protect” British products and goods.

Other countries had not yet caught us up in the race for world trade, and could not compete with the important British industries, such as coal, cotton, iron and steel, and shipbuilding. So there was little un-

* It is often said that 1846 marks the beginning of Free Trade. This is not true. William Pitt had removed certain duties as early as 1786, and Huskisson continued this work from 1823 onwards.

employment, and the standard of life among the working classes rose very much higher, for trade improved, wages increased, and prices fell.

Instead of getting money from duties on foreign goods, the Governments of that time came to rely chiefly on the proceeds of the Income Tax—a tax that



W. E. Gladstone.

(From a portrait by Sir John Millais.)

was very unpopular when it was first introduced, in a small way, by Pitt, but which is now generally accepted as just and fair, because under its regulations people are taxed according to their means. The Government also retained a certain number of duties on such things as tea, currants, tobacco, and spirits, which they considered to be luxuries.

By 1867, then, English commerce was exceedingly prosperous. Under the Free Trade system cheap imports poured in, and for this and for other reasons the people were better fed and better clothed than they had been for a century. Let us now consider the position of the industries which were making all the goods which Britain exported to pay for her food and raw materials.

After 1850 Britain was not only a maker of woollen and cotton goods, she was also a great maker of metal and machines. Soon after 1850 began the manufacture of steel from molten iron, which proved much cheaper and more durable than iron, and this improvement produced still more machines, engines, boilers, and furnaces. The study of chemistry also made great strides, and many chemical works were established. New dyes and new metals came into use, and photography was rapidly developed. A great many more "luxuries"—books, clothing, pictures—found their way into the houses of the people, not only in this country but also abroad. Between 1850 and 1870 British exports increased in value from £71,000,000 to £199,000,000. Britain had indeed become the "workshop of the world."

Several new plans were made by which trade and industry could be carried on more easily. The most important of these, perhaps, was the joint-stock company. Up to this time factories and shops, and businesses of all kinds, were owned by one man, or by two or more partners. They provided the money to start and run the business, and they took the profits. But nowadays there are not many large firms which are still "family concerns." A business is usually a

“company.” Its affairs are managed by a board of directors, and the money needed to start it is subscribed by a number of people who buy shares in the business and are called shareholders. John Smith, draper, becomes John Smith and Son when he takes his son into partnership, but later on the lettering on his shop may be “John Smith and Co., Ltd.” This change would usually mean that he found he had not enough money to build a better shop or to buy more stock, and so he invited people to become shareholders in his business,* now to be carried on by a board of management. Probably he himself would be chairman of the board and chief shareholder, but instead of getting all the profits, after he had paid his wages and his other expenses, he would first of all pay to the shareholders interest on the money they had lent to him or “invested” in his business.

This new system, which turned hundreds of firms into joint-stock companies, was very important. It meant the end of the old family system, in which the employer and the workman worked together and knew all about each other. The new plan weakened personal relationships; but it was a good way of getting money to expand trade, and it made some businesses very large and prosperous. A great many people began to “invest” in business concerns of all kinds, and put their money into railway and shipping companies, iron and steel works, and coal mines. They received interest on their money in the form of a “dividend,” but they did not usually have any real

* Not always. A firm might become a “limited liability company” without appealing to the general public to purchase shares in their business.

control over the management of the business, and were content if they received a good dividend regularly.

Another plan for carrying on industry on a large scale was by the trust or combine. When, instead of little homely workshops fitted with very few tools and appliances, it was necessary to have large factories full of elaborate machinery, it became very expensive to run a business. Not only did it mean spending a great deal of money on buying the necessary machinery, but the large buildings and machines also needed a great deal of attention. The result was that businesses began to get larger and larger, because it was cheaper and easier to add to the buildings and employ new workpeople than to start new businesses, and the larger the output the cheaper the article produced. Very often a large concern, such as an iron and steel works, would also have its own colliery, brickfield, light railway, steamers, and so on. That is to say, several industries came under one management. Sometimes several firms, all making one thing, such as soap, would either join together or be bought up by one very big firm. Sometimes firms of the same kind would not join together under one management, but would make a "trust," and come to all sorts of agreements about what prices they should charge and how much they should manufacture, and what wages they should pay.

The first half of the century was remarkable for the growth of these trusts or combines, which often made the employers very powerful and rich; but the organizers of a trust, as a rule, used this power wisely, and legislation has been introduced to control them in the interests of the public. But we are anticipating.

Industry, then, in 1867 had become much more varied. A great many new kinds of goods were being manufactured, and the work was beginning to be carried on by big businesses rather than small. The little factory and shop were gradually being "frozen out" by the big firms, who had plenty of money to improve their machinery, to advertise their goods, and to get the best workers.

Another factor which had made industry more efficient by 1867 was the way in which capital could be borrowed much more easily. Several joint-stock banks were formed, and they were much safer and better able to lend large sums of money than the small private banks, of which many had failed early in the century. Cheques began to be used more widely, and everything was done to make it easier and quicker for firms to do business with one another. So sound were British banks, and so good was British credit, that London became the great financial centre of the world.

We have spoken of British commerce and manufacture. Another great improvement took place in her shopkeeping. Shops in the early nineteenth century were not very numerous, and not at all like the shops of to-day. There were drapers' and haberdashers' shops, like that of John Gilpin or the one in which Robert Owen served, and there were the shops of pastry-cooks and tailors and silversmiths. But there were no big stores such as we have to-day. Even in 1820 Cobbett writes about shops as "accursed novelties," and he wants to have the old markets and fairs back again.

But when the roads were improved and gas was

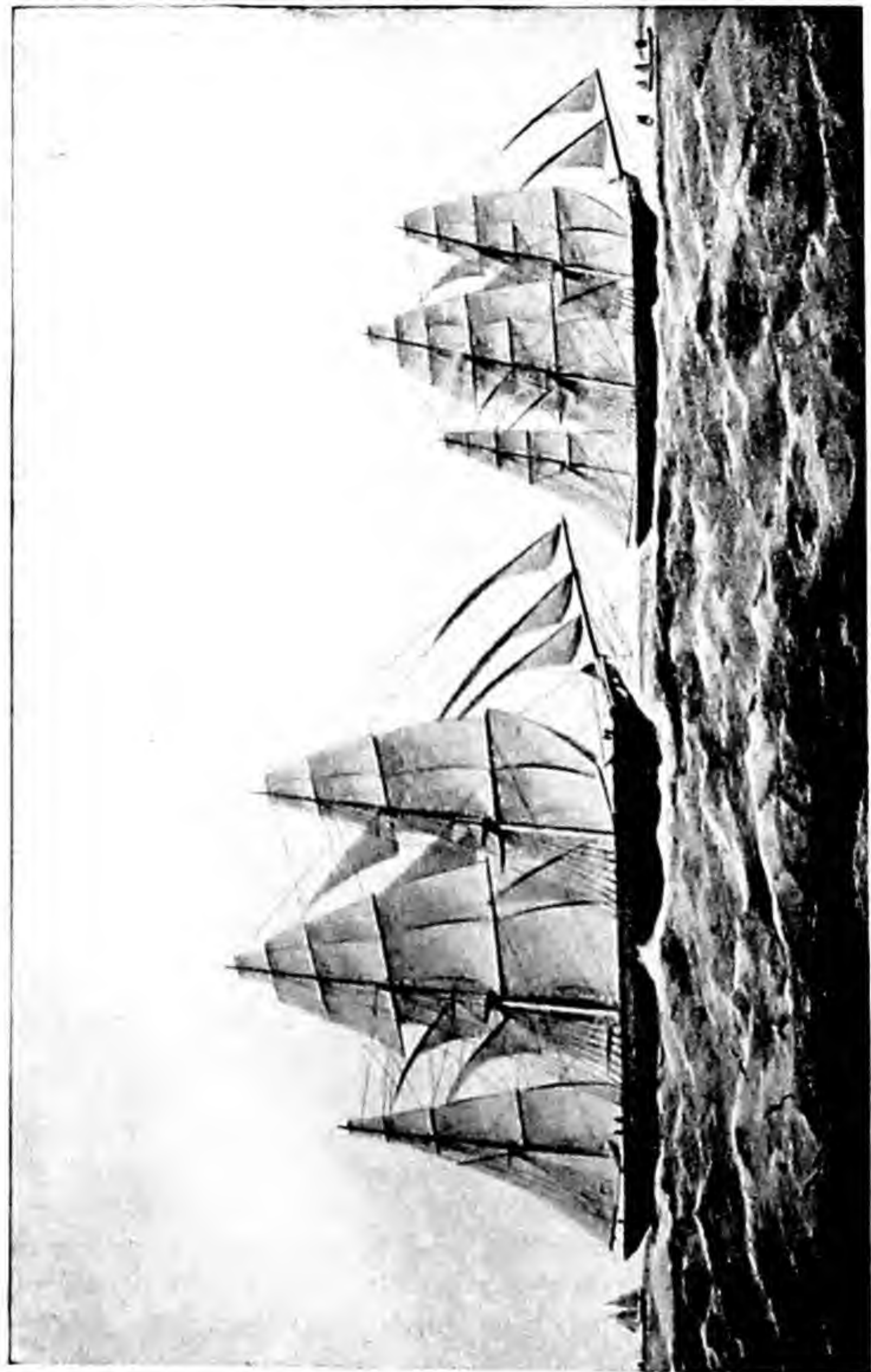
invented, so that the streets were better lit, the shops began to improve too. Gradually the factories turned out more and more goods, and shops were needed to stock and sell them. Huge stores, or "multiple shops" under one firm, sprang up, which sold every kind of goods and claimed to be "universal providers." These shops could sell things more cheaply and had more variety of goods.

The latter half of the nineteenth century, which includes the so-called mid-Victorian and late-Victorian eras, was a very prosperous period if we consider the people as a whole. What were the chief causes of this great prosperity? Firstly, it was a time of peace for England. Not only did she have no big wars to fight abroad, but at home the revolutionary time was over, and the workers were, on the whole, settling down to improve their condition by peaceful and constitutional means.



Coal areas of Great Britain.

But there was not much prosperity abroad. France was going through a very troubled time with changes of government, and finally the terrible Franco-German War (1870-71), which left her exhausted. Germany and Italy were both fighting for the unity of their country, and were too busy with their struggles to try



Race between the China clippers *Taeping* and *Arica* (1866).

and compete with England's trade. America was distressed by the Civil War (1861-65) between the North and the South.

Britain had, therefore, a great start in the commercial race. She had been the first to use machinery and to build factories and ships, and now she was the first to make use of them to spread her trade.

Secondly, as we saw before, Britain became supreme because of her copious supplies of good coal. This is most important. Coal was king of the nineteenth century. It was wanted for railways and ships, and factories and furnaces. Britain had not only enormous quantities of coal, but it was very easy to get and near to the coast, and therefore easy to ship abroad. In 1800, 10,000,000 tons of coal were mined in Great Britain; in 1897, 200,000,000 tons. Not only was there a great deal of coal, but it was the right kind for making coke, and so for use in making iron. Cheap coal and coke helped Britain to make her goods cheaply, and to work her steam-engines and steamships economically.

The third cause of Britain's trade supremacy was her leadership in shipping, about which we read in the last chapter. The English sea captain in his tramp steamer, looking for cargoes in any home or foreign port, and carrying them from one country to another, was the symbol of British trade. Britain had the shipyards in which to build ships, the money to pay for them, the men to sail them, and the cargoes with which to load them.

Lastly, and perhaps most important of all, was the growth of Britain's great Empire, for it was during these years that the chief colonies of Britain developed

into what was to become the British Commonwealth of Nations of which we speak to-day.

The British Empire, which now contains a quarter of the world's inhabitants, developed enormously in area, wealth, and population during the nineteenth century. Commerce and shipping and railways brought the farthest parts nearer, and medical science made it easier for white people to live safely in the tropics. The population of Britain increased very rapidly, and this increase led to a stream of emigrants to the colonies as well as to the United States. Gradually the pasture lands of Australia and New Zealand, the wheat prairies and timber forests of Canada, and the mines of South Africa, began to be opened up.

The total trade of the Empire rose from less than £100,000,000 in 1800 to £1,500,000,000 in 1900. Only about one-sixth of the population of the British Commonwealth and Empire are white, and the fact that these large native populations were dependent on her meant that Britain was able to export large quantities of manufactured goods which the natives could not make for themselves.

Canada became a Dominion in 1867. But it was not until the twentieth century that the British Commonwealth of self-governing nations came into being: Australia in 1901, New Zealand in 1907, South Africa in 1910. (Northern Ireland is part of the United Kingdom but the southern part of the country, the Irish Republic, is an independent state.) The Dominions look after their own finances, and their own trade and internal affairs. In most cases they have set up tariffs to protect their own industries, but have sometimes given "preference" to British goods over those of other nations.

Although held together by tradition and loyalty to the throne, the self-governing Dominions are really



Joseph Chamberlain.
(Colonial Secretary, 1895-1903.)

separate nations working together for the good of the whole Empire. They send representatives to the Imperial Conference held in London every few years,

at which great questions of policy common to the various parts of the Empire are discussed.

Although the Dominions are in many ways independent, the twentieth century has brought them in other ways much closer to us. At the beginning of



A view of the Suez Canal.

the nineteenth century it took eight months to get to Australia, and no business letter could be both sent and answered within a year, so it was very difficult to do business at all. Now, not only is there a service of telegraphs which enables business to be done within twenty-four hours, but there is growing up a telephone communication which makes it almost as easy to discuss a business deal with some one in Canada or

Australia as with the man in the next street. Wireless, too, has made the Empire draw closer together as its different members get to know each other better.

The British Empire is rich in all the necessities of life; wheat, mutton, coal, cotton, gold, iron, wool, sugar—all these and many others are the treasures of the Empire. The Empire is also rich in loyalty, because the statesmen of this period of which we are speaking realized that by granting liberty to the colonies they were not encouraging them to separate, but were really binding them closer in a common allegiance to the Crown.

There are also two other changes in the nineteenth century which must be remembered because of the effect they had on our trade. These were the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, and the building of the railways across America. These two events were a very great help to our commerce and our shipping.

There was, however, a bad as well as a good side to this rapid growth of trade. One of the bad results was that agriculture became very neglected. The manufacturers and the shopkeepers were very important and rich, and they were delighted with Free Trade, which allowed them to get food and materials from abroad very cheaply. But the farmers did not like Free Trade, because foreign corn and meat could be sold more cheaply than the home produce. After about 1880 agriculture was much depressed, and the farmers could not afford to pay good wages to their labourers. Many agricultural labourers flocked to the towns or emigrated, and those that remained on the land were badly paid. In the latter part of the century Joseph Arch made valiant efforts to get the

agricultural labourers to join a Trade-Union, but this attempt ended in failure, and to this day the labourers



Thomas Carlyle.
(From a painting by Sir John Millais.)

on the land are worse off than any others, and the farmers are often very discontented.

Depression in agriculture is part of the bad side of the picture. Another part is the love of money-making, which made the end of the nineteenth century

seem rather sordid. A great many men saw some of the evil effects of this state of affairs, which we now call "commercialism." John Ruskin, Thomas Carlyle, William Morris, and many others, set themselves to fight against the idea that the nation's chief need was to make money. They taught that work should be done for the joy of doing it, that the workers should be treated as human beings and not as mere "hands," and that the things which were made, bought, and sold should be beautiful and of good quality instead of "cheap and nasty."

The late-Victorian age was a time not only of wealth, but of ugliness. People made much money, but many of them did not know how to spend it wisely. Their houses were ugly and elaborate and stuffy; their furniture was heavy, their clothes were often hideous and unhealthy. Many of them were rather stiff and pompous people, and inclined to think that trade and the money they made out of it were the finest things on earth.

"There is no Wealth but Life," wrote Ruskin, who tried hard to teach people to love beauty and goodness more than money. Here are some noble words which he wrote in 1860, just at the time when this new "get rich quick" period was beginning: "We need examples of people who, leaving Heaven to decide whether they are to rise in the world, decide for themselves that they will be happy in it, and have resolved to seek—not greater wealth, but simpler pleasure; not higher fortune, but deeper felicity; making the first of possessions, self-possession; and honouring themselves in the harmless pride and calm pursuits of peace."

We shall see how, in this very commercialized England, movements were on foot which showed that her heart was not entirely given over to trade. It is about these social movements that we shall read in the next few chapters.

CHAPTER 15.—SOCIALISM AND THE TRADE-UNION MOVEMENT (1867-1914)

Liberalism after 1867—Revival of Socialism in the eighties—Marx, George, Ruskin, and Morris—Fabian Society, and Independent Labour Party—Rise of the Labour Party—Development of the Trade-Unions—New Unionism and the Dock Strike of 1889—Trade-Union legislation—New Socialist movements—Strikes and the Triple Alliance—Importance of Trade-Unionism

“ We who once were fools and dreamers, then shall be the brave and wise ;

There amidst the world new-built shall our earthly deeds abide,
Though our names be all forgotten, and the tale of how we died.”

WILLIAM MORRIS : *All for the Cause* (1883).

WE have not yet said much about the political parties or politicians of the nineteenth century. That is because, before 1867, the politicians did not have very much to do with the subject of this book, which is the life and work of the people of Modern England. After the Second Reform Act of 1867, however, politics became very much more interesting to that person whom we sometimes call the “ man in the street.” He had a vote and he could use it, and it mattered very much to him what sort of people were sitting in Parliament. It also mattered to him what political parties there were, and how they could help him and the country.

During the period between 1867 and 1902 the

Conservatives held office, or were "in power," for twenty-one years, their chief leaders being Benjamin Disraeli (afterwards Earl of Beaconsfield) and Lord Salisbury. During the rest of the period—that is to say, for fourteen years—the Liberals were in power, their chief leader being William Ewart Gladstone. The Liberals claimed to be more "progressive," more desirous of making changes for the better, than the Conservatives were supposed to be, the name of whose party stood, let us say, for "caution" or "go slow." All the same, the newer Conservatives were not standing still, and we have already seen how Disraeli was very anxious to improve the conditions of life of the workers. We may say, therefore, that there was in both great parties a true liberal spirit, and that the country as a whole was progressive during this period.

After Chartism collapsed everything was, outwardly at least, very peaceful and quiet for a long time. The employers were prosperous, while wages went up and prices went down. But between '78 and '87 a bad time came again, and the workers began to grumble more and more loudly. You will remember reading in Chapter 7 about the early ideas of Socialism which Robert Owen and others had talked about a great many years before. These ideas had never quite been abandoned, although for a long time nobody thought much about them. But now, when the majority of the workers were feeling very much depressed, Socialism revived.

It is important for us to know a little about the history of Socialism, because to-day it is often discussed in newspapers, and it is one of the burning questions of our time.

There were three different forms in which Socialism appeared, and, if we look at each of these, we shall be able to see how the Socialism of our own day has developed.

The first kind of Socialism came to be connected with the name of a famous German thinker called Karl Marx (1818-83). The name of Marx is often mentioned, because his views were very much admired by the Bolsheviki who carried out the revolution in Russia in 1917, and they are the foundation on which the more advanced Socialists in every country base their arguments.



Karl Marx.

Marx was a German of Jewish extraction who settled in England in 1849. His most famous book, called *Capital*, was published in 1867. He believed in revolution as the best way for the workers to gain the chief power in the State, and he believed in war between the classes as not only necessary but also desirable. He also taught that the only value of a thing is in the labour that has gone to make it, and that all profits should go to the worker in the narrower sense of the term.

Another man whose ideas had great influence on the growth of Socialism was an American, Henry George (1839-97). George wrote a book called

Progress and Poverty, which was published in 1879, and he himself lectured in England. His message was that the land really belonged to the people, and that no landlord was entitled to receive rent for land, for it was not really his "property." *Progress and Poverty* sold in tens of thousands of copies, and did more than any other book to turn the minds of a great number of working men towards Socialist ideas.

The earliest Socialist society in England was founded in 1881, and was called the London Democratic Federation. It was founded by Henry Hyndman, and was "Marxist" in its policy. Its programme was the ownership by the State of all the "means of production, distribution, and exchange"; the "release" of the workers from capitalists and landlords, and the establishment of equal rights for men and women. The adoption of this programme meant that the Federation approved of Marx's idea of a class war, and did not believe very much in the usefulness of Acts of Parliament for bringing about social reform. They were frankly considered to be a mere patching-up of a system too bad to be mended; and a complete change, or revolution, was declared to be the only solution.

Another group of people gave Socialism quite a different aspect. We have already mentioned John Ruskin (1819-1900). Ruskin was a member of a very respectable and wealthy middle-class family, but he grew up with a hatred of the way in which some rich men of his day were making and spending money. He began life as an art critic, and his earlier books are all about architecture and painting, but his later ones are on political economy—about wealth, and wages,

and profits. Ruskin taught that the most important man is he who makes something useful with the labour of his hands. The employers or capitalists he often compared to the robber barons of the Middle Ages. He hated machinery, and had no admiration at all for the new industrial Britain, which to him was ugly, and cared for none of the graces of life. He wrote a great many books, and gave hundreds of lectures on various subjects, literary, artistic, and social, and in the sixties and seventies he was one of the most famous men of the day. Not only the workers but many of the middle classes listened to him, and his vigorous manner of speaking and writing, as well as his real sympathy for the downtrodden and miserable, gave him great influence. Ruskin would not have called himself a Socialist, but many of his ideas were expressed in words which any Socialist of to-day would use with pride.



John Ruskin.

In his hatred of machinery, his love of beauty and of manual labour, and in his sympathy for the poor, Ruskin was very similar to another famous member of this group—William Morris (1834-96).

Morris was a man of genius, and did fine work in several branches of art and literature. He was a poet, an artist, a craftsman, a journalist, a prophet.

We often hear of Morris tapestries and wall-papers, because Morris and his friends formed a brotherhood of craftsmen which aimed at making by hand all kinds of beautiful things. Morris founded the Socialist League in 1885, and wrote many beautiful poems and stories to illustrate and advance his Socialist ideas,



William Morris.

and the words which stand at the head of this chapter show that he and his friends were ready to brave anything for the cause in which they believed.

Morris was very like Ruskin in his views. He believed that so long as the people were bound by the industrial system, with its squalor and poverty, and its grinding, monotonous work, they could not really enjoy art or the beauties of nature. He did not see very clearly what was to be done about the matter, but he showed the world that there was something wrong with industrial Britain, which

was so rich as a whole, and in which so many individuals lived lives which were so ugly and unhappy. "He wanted passionately that the things men had to make should be worth making—a joy to the maker and to the user."

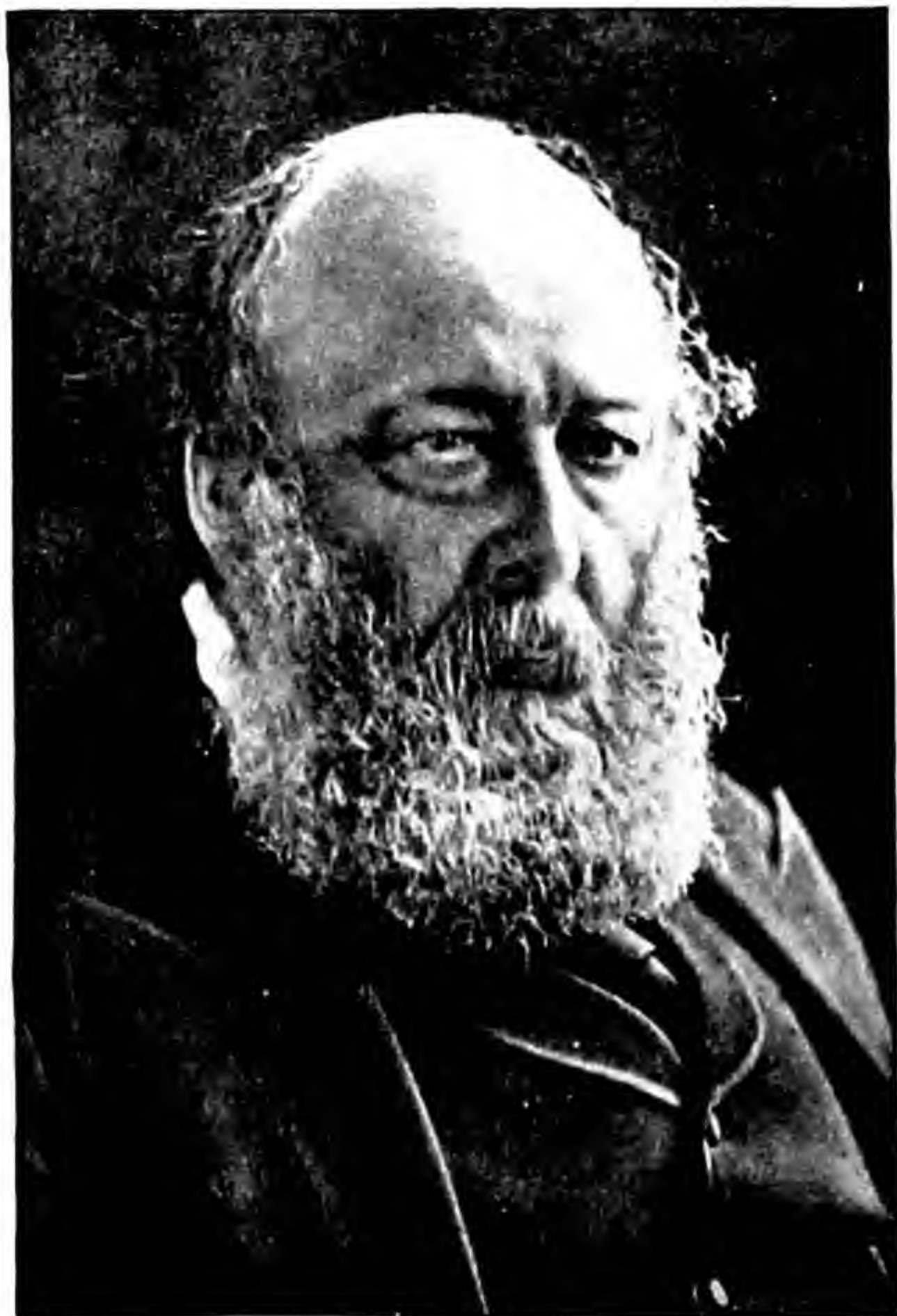
Ruskin and Morris had many devoted followers who wanted to try and lead men back to a simpler, happier country life—a life like that of the Middle

Ages without its evils. Their Socialism was a very different thing from that of Marx. All believed in the overthrow of capitalism, and in the power of the man who does the work rather than the man who merely pays for it to be done. But Ruskin and Morris had a higher ideal than Marx. They believed in and loved their fellow-men, and they cared more about the souls of their fellow-men than about their wages. Marx longed to relieve the oppression of the poor, but he was very bitter and proud, and he had not the gift of putting his ideas into noble words so that they could be loved and remembered.

So far, people had been taught rather a violent kind of Socialism, and neither the ideas of Marx nor those of Morris were likely to be of very much use to them in their own lives. The industrial system was, on the whole, working efficiently, and Britain was prosperous. It was most unlikely that there would be any violent revolution, and quite absurd to imagine that the workers earning high wages in the towns were all going to troop back to the country to weave and work in the fields.

So it was the third group of Socialists who won the day—the people who decided to make the best of the industrial system as it was. Their aim was to introduce into Parliament as many social reforms as possible, and also to try and win people over to Socialism by their speeches and writings.

This group included two very different societies. There was firstly the Fabian Society, founded in 1883. This society was not very large, but it has always had a great influence because its members were among the keenest and most intellectual of the Socialists.



Lord Salisbury.
(Prime Minister, 1885-6, 1886-92, 1895-1902.)

They published a great many tracts and essays, and were anxious to educate people gradually * to a belief in their own ideas. The Fabians did not believe in revolution. They believed, however, that all "unearned" wealth in money or land should not be held by individual people, but should be used by the State to pay for all the social reforms which were needed. They wanted every man, woman, and child to have at least a reasonable amount of income and leisure as well as education and comfort.

The second society was formed in 1893, and was known as the Independent Labour Party. This was a body with strong Socialist views, aiming at the ownership by the State of "all the means of production, distribution, and exchange," and trying to get its views expressed in Parliament. It did not, like the Social Democratic Federation, believe in revolution, nor did it go quite so slowly and carefully as the Fabian Society, but its programme included a long list of social reforms which it intended to try and get carried by Parliament.

And so we come to what is perhaps the most important event of all in the history of British Socialism—the rise of the Labour Party as we know it to-day.

During the nineteenth century a tremendous change had taken place in the attitude of politicians towards the working classes. The Liberal Party always prided itself on being the party of progress and democracy,

* Hence the name Fabian, from Fabius Maximus, the Roman general who commanded the Roman army after its defeat by Hannibal at Lake Trasimenus in 217 B.C., and who persistently withdrew from a direct encounter with the enemy and so earned for himself the surname of Cunctator, or the "delayer."

or government "of the people by the people for the people." In 1849 Bamford, a Radical weaver who had led the demonstration at Peterloo, was made a door-keeper at Somerset House, in London, by a Liberal Government. Forty years later Broadhurst, a Trade Union leader whom Gladstone wished to honour, was made, not a doorkeeper, but an Under Secretary of State. Twenty years passed, and John Burns became the first working-man Cabinet Minister in a Liberal Cabinet.



James Keir Hardie.

Before 1900 there had been a few working men elected to Parliament, but the majority of these were known by the nickname of "Lib.-Labs."—that is to say, they represented the working class but were members of the Liberal Party. Only in 1892 did three Socialists become members. These were Keir Hardie, John Burns, and Havelock Wilson. Keir Hardie became the founder of the Independent Labour Party, and,

until his death in 1915, was the most striking figure in the Labour movement. In 1900 the Labour Representation Committee was formed, which later became the Labour Party. This was the result of a great effort to get working men returned to Parliament, and its object was to form a party, distinct from the Liberal and Conservative parties, with its own programme and its own officials. The secretary of the Labour Party was Ramsay MacDonald, who, in

1924, became Prime Minister and head of the first Labour Government.

At the election of 1906, when the Liberals came back to power, the new Labour Party had a distinct success, for they succeeded in winning forty-one seats in Parliament. It is only from 1906 that we can date our three modern parties—Conservative, Liberal, and Labour. The Labour Party of that time, however, was not at all like what it is to-day. It was not a Socialist Party, although many of its members were Socialists. Some of its older members were still really Liberal in politics, and were anxious always to act and vote with the Liberals. Its members were chiefly old and tried Trade-Union leaders, and they believed in the Fabian policy of going slowly and getting what reforms they could where and when they could. In order to understand better the history of the Labour Party, which has been so active in the present century, we must go back and look once more at the story of Trade-Unionism.

When we last read about the Trade-Unions they had settled down to a slow and steady building up of their funds and their membership. After this rather uninteresting period came a time of great activity, which began with the Trade-Union Act of 1871, the "Charter" of Trade-Unionism. But the most important year from the Trade-Union point of view was the year 1889—which was, it may be noted with interest, exactly a hundred years after the outbreak of the French Revolution.

There had been a great many breezes to fan the flames of discontent among the workers. There was the long period of depression from '78 to '87, with its

widespread unemployment and low wages ; there were the stirring messages of Morris and Hyndman, and the writings of Henry George and the Fabians. In the



Charles Booth.
(Photo : Elliot and Fry.)

eighties, too, was published a great work by Charles Booth and his helpers called the *Life and Labour of the People of London*. This book showed in what terrible poverty, and under what wretched conditions, vast

masses of the people were still living. It showed especially how badly paid and overworked were the unskilled labourers who were not in the Trade-Unions, and the "sweated" women workers. When trade revived again in the eighties, there was a strong feeling that there must be a forward movement by the Unions; that they were not doing enough for the very poor—the people who were called at that time the "submerged tenth"—and must not only try to get these unskilled workers into Trade-Unions, but also fight for better conditions.

Two watchwords were in the mouths of the Labour leaders at that time—"the Eight Hours Day" and "the Minimum Wage." The year 1889 saw a great spread of Trade-Unionism of a different kind from the old. It was known as "New Unionism."

The "New Trade-Unions"—those of the dockers, the general labourers, the railway workers, and many others—differed from the old Unions. Instead of including the workers in one particular branch of a trade—such as the cotton spinners, the carpenters, the engineers, and so on—they aimed at including all the workers in an industry, men and women, skilled and unskilled. This meant that they had to have a very low subscription, because some of the members were among the worst paid of the workers and could not afford to pay for all the many benefits, such as sick pay, old age pensions, and so on, which the older Unions provided. Their aim was not to be a Friendly Society of fellow workers in a trade, but a great fighting machine to band together, if necessary, against the employers, using the strike as a weapon.

The strike, indeed, became the chief hope of the

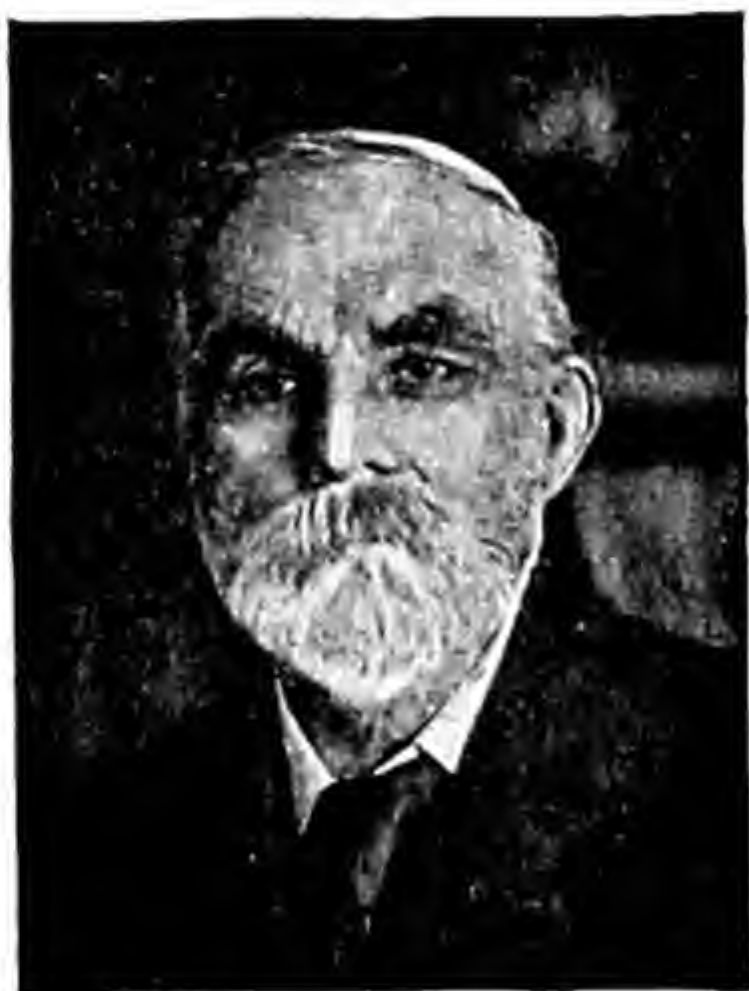
New Unions, and their funds were carefully set apart for supporting this type of industrial warfare. The year 1889 saw a strike which was the first of a long series during the period before the Great War—the great Dock Strike. This strike of ten thousand dock labourers, who were very poorly paid and badly organized, lasted for a month. The dockers finally won nearly all their demands, including a wage of 6*d.* an hour, which was known as the “Docker’s Tanner.” The strike roused the sympathy of a great many people, who sent money to help the strikers. Its main result was to encourage other Trade-Unions, and, although there were very many strikes which were a great drain upon the funds of the Unions, by the end of the century the Trade-Unions were very strong. The old Unions and the new type had now settled down side by side, and they were united in pressing for new laws to be passed by Parliament which should help the working classes.

When the Labour Party was formed, as we have seen, in 1900, it joined together the Trade-Unions and the Socialists. Many of the Trade-Union leaders, such as John Burns and Ben Tillett, the leaders of the Dock Strike, were also members of Socialist societies. On the other hand, many Trade-Unionists still belonged to the Liberal Party. These two sections drew more closely together when the Labour Party was formed, and by degrees, as the older men retired, the Socialists formed the vast majority of the party, so that in our own time the Labour Party has become the Socialist Party.

Before this development happened the Trade-Unions had to go through a difficult time. First of

all, after a strike by the workers on the Taff Vale Railway in 1900, the Railway Company was allowed by the judges £50,000 in damages from the Railway Trade-Union to repay them for the losses which the strike had caused. This "Taff Vale judgment" meant, of course, that it would be dangerous for any Trade-Union to call a strike in case it had to pay damages to the employers.

It was not until the Liberal victory of 1906 that the new Labour Party were able to get an Act passed which protected the Trade-Unions. This was called the Trade Disputes Act, and it put the Trade-Unions in a very strong position, because it made it impossible to bring an action against a Trade-Union for arranging a strike, and it also allowed "peaceful picketing" — that is to say, quiet persuading of workers to take part in a strike.



John Burns.

Another blow fell, however, in 1909 when, by the Osborne judgment, it was decided that Trade-Unions could not use their money to help the Labour Party or any object connected with party politics. The Labour Party got so much of its money from the Trade-Unions, some of which were very wealthy, that this decision very nearly brought it to an end; but in 1911

payment of salaries to members of Parliament began, so that it became just possible for working-class members to support themselves without help from the party or the Trade-Unions. It was not until 1913 that the Trade-Union Act was passed which allowed the Unions to take part in politics, and which arranged for a special "political fund" to be created. The money in this fund was used for political work, but any Trade-Union member who did not want to support the Labour Party could refuse to contribute without ceasing to be a member of the Union.

In the years just before the outbreak of war in 1914, therefore, the Trade-Unions had won a strong position in Parliament and in the country. They had succeeded in getting two Acts passed which were very favourable to themselves. They had, as we shall see in the next chapter, helped to pass a great many very useful laws. But in spite of all this success, strikes grew more serious to the country as a whole, and the leaders of the movement more violent. There was a strong feeling in the minds of many people that neither the Unions nor the Labour Party had yet done anything to win a real and lasting improvement in the standard of life of the working classes.

In 1913 there were about four million Trade-Union members, and the Socialist societies were also growing fast. Several new forms of Socialism were talked about, which were different from the "State Socialism" of the Fabian Society. One of these new movements was called Syndicalism, and aimed at the direct control of each industry by the workers in it. "The Mines for the Miners" and "the Railways for the Railwaymen" were two of the cries, or "slogans,"

of the Syndicalists. They called for what was known as "Direct Action," by which they meant the attempt by the workers themselves to take industry into their own hands. There was to be strike after strike, until the capitalists or employers grew weaker and weaker, and then a "General Strike" of all workers in every industry. Most of the Syndicalists believed in class war, and many of their ideas came from Karl Marx.

A much more moderate movement was "Guild Socialism," which aimed at State ownership of all the factories and mines and railways, but to set up National Guilds of all the people engaged in an industry, whatever their work might be, to manage the affairs of that industry.

These new ideas are important, because they show that there was a great feeling of unrest and of discontent with the system by which the workers were paid wages and had no voice in fixing the conditions under which they worked. The chief storm centres were the mines and the railways, and the miners and the railwaymen began to draw closer together. In 1911 there was a big strike of railway and transport workers, and because coal could not be carried many miners were thrown out of work. In 1912 a great miners' strike threw out of employment thousands of railway and transport men. The railwaymen had formed one huge and very strong Union called the National Union of Railwaymen, and the miners had also joined many smaller Unions together in the Miners' Federation. The next step was to arrange some kind of alliance between these Unions which would help them to take action together. In 1914 the "Triple Alliance" was formed. This was an alliance between the miners,

the railwaymen, and the transport workers, which made them ready to act together and support each other at a time of crisis.

It can very easily be seen how important these great Unions are, for without coal or railways, or any kind of transport, all trade is at a standstill. If the Triple Alliance should choose to strike together, the whole life of the country would be paralysed. This was the great danger which faced Britain in the year 1914.



Mazzini.

We have spent a good deal of time on the history of the Trade-Unions because they are one of the most important factors in our recent history. We must not forget that, as the Unions joined together and increased their numbers and their resources, so did the Unions or Federations of Employers. A hundred years ago a dispute would usually have been settled by an employer interviewing his

own workmen. Sometimes, when times were hard, a mob of workmen would collect, and would try to bargain with their employer by threatening to damage his mill. But to-day very few disputes take place in industry in which the Trade-Unions do not take part. Sometimes it is just the local Trade-Union secretary who interviews the manager of the factory. Sometimes the dispute, if it is a serious one, spreads to the whole country. Delegates from the Trade-Unions

concerned travel to London, and there they meet delegates from the Employers' Federation round a table on equal terms. There are still the "two nations" about which Disraeli spoke, but they no longer meet as "rich and poor," or even as "master and servant." They meet as "employer and employed," each of whom has rights and each of whom has duties. They do not always meet as friends, but they do not often meet as enemies, and that state of affairs marks a great advance. We shall see how this spirit of conciliation grew up after the war.

A very great Italian, Mazzini, who loved liberty as much as any man, wrote of Karl Marx: "Hatred outweighs love in his heart, which is not right even if the hatred may in itself have foundation."

The Trade-Unions have done a splendid social work. They have taught the workers how to shoulder responsibility, how to express themselves, how to control and spend large sums of money. They demand a high standard of character in their officials and a high sense of public duty. Above all, they teach that we are all dependent on each other—employer on employed, skilled craftsman on unskilled labourer.

CHAPTER 16.—SOCIAL REFORM (1867-1914)

Condition of the poorest classes at the end of the nineteenth century—Sweated workers, casual labourers, and unemployed—New interest in social reform and social work—Decline of “laissez faire”—Social legislation from 1867 to 1900, and from 1906 to 1914—Trade Boards, Old Age Pensions, Labour Exchanges, Industrial Insurance—Growth of State interference

* With fingers weary and worn, with eyelids heavy and red,
A woman sat in unwomanly rags, plying her needle and thread ;
Stitch ! stitch ! stitch ! in poverty, hunger, and dirt ;
And still, with a voice of dolorous pitch, she sang the ‘ Song of the
Shirt.’ ”

THOMAS HOOD : *Song of the Shirt* (1843).

TO-DAY there are three great political parties—Conservative, Liberal, and Labour. Each of these parties has its supporters in every walk of life, but no candidate at an election would get a hearing if he did not promise to support at least some measures of social reform. We live in an age when most people expect Parliament to pass laws for improving the conditions of life.

To us it may seem strange that this was not always so. It is hard for us to realize how very strong the idea of *laissez faire*, or “Leave it alone,” was in the nineteenth century. After the Second Reform Act Parliament became much more closely in touch with

the people, and much keener to make good and helpful laws. At that time began the fight for better wages and better houses, and the new desire arose on the part of the nation as a whole to help and protect the children and the old people and the deserving poor, instead of leaving this humane duty to a few charitable people. This fight began in the reign of Queen Victoria, yet it was after 1906 that the greatest mass of what we call "social legislation" was passed.

In spite of all the improvements which had made the life of many people happier and more comfortable, there were still at the end of the nineteenth century a great number of men and women who were living in poverty and misery. Most of them had not been helped by the Factory Acts or by the Trade-Unions, for they were casual* labourers, or women working at trades in their own homes, or unemployed of all sorts who then had no unemployment insurance money to help them and their families to live.

A German named Engels, who was a friend of Karl Marx, knew a great deal about conditions in England, and he wrote in 1885: "As to the great mass of the working people, the state of misery and insecurity in which they live now is as low as ever, if not lower. The East of London is an ever-spreading pool of stagnant misery and desolation. . . ."

This may have been an exaggeration, but those who thought about the condition of the poor were greatly troubled by three classes of people. There were, firstly, the factory workers who were working in dangerous trades or in trades which were not

* Labourers engaged for short periods without any fixed employment.

covered by the factory laws until 1867. Many of these factories or workshops were dark and dirty, and overcrowded. Disease and poisoning were often caused by the dirty conditions of work, and the careless way in which dangerous substances like phosphorus, mercury, and arsenic were used. "We marvel," wrote one of the factory inspectors in 1872, "to see women at the anvil and forge ; men nursing while the wives toil for the weekly wages, and infants everywhere mewling in the arms of other infants very little older than themselves, till one begins to think that the old, old days of factory labour have returned."

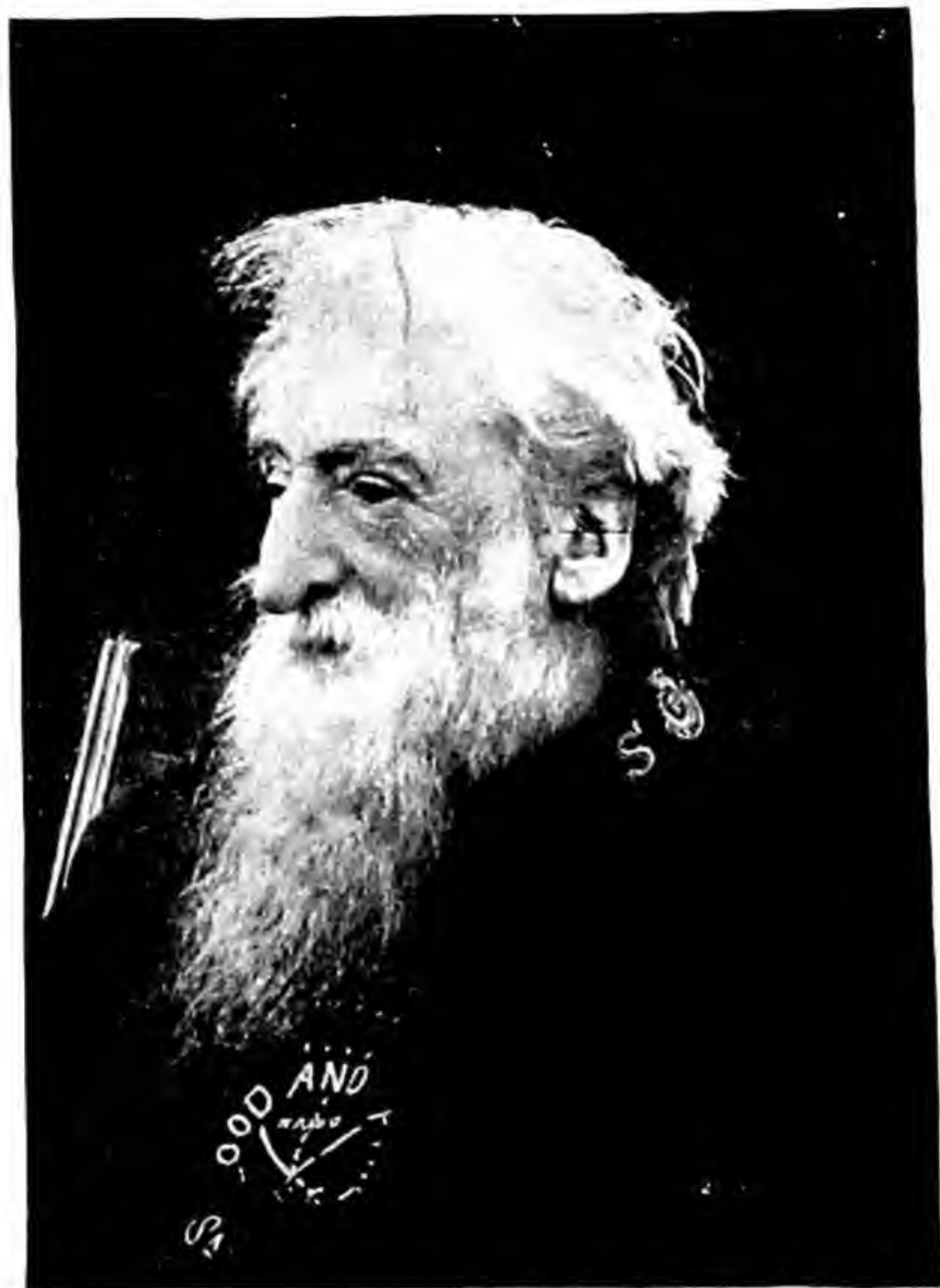
Secondly, there were hundreds of very badly paid workers, mostly women, whose labour was known as "sweated labour." One of the very useful inventions which gave rise to a great deal of "sweating" was the sewing machine, which came into use after the middle of the century. A sewing machine could be used even in the smallest room, and tailors and dress-makers gave out work to be machined by women working in their own homes, who often earned a few coppers for a hard day's toil. In the East End of London especially there were hundreds of small workshops and living rooms where the sewing machines buzzed for twelve hours a day, and wages were very low because the workers were too poor and ignorant to be able to fight their own battle.

The third unfortunate class was that of the unemployed, among whom were large numbers of casual labourers. We saw how the rise of the new Trade-Unions for unskilled labourers and the great Dock Strike did a great deal to draw attention to the claims of the casual workers for better conditions. But for

the vast body of unemployed there was nothing but the workhouse or the few shillings they could get as poor relief. However busy the factories, and however flourishing trade might be, there were always a number of men and women who had no work either through age or illness or accident—because they had no means of hearing about likely jobs in other districts, because their particular trade was slack, or in some cases just because they were the kind of people nobody wanted to employ—the “unemployables.”

Now all through the century there had been unemployed casuals as well as many overworked and underpaid factory workers. A few men of courage and kindness, like Robert Owen, Lord Shaftesbury, Charles Kingsley, and John Ruskin, had laboured on their behalf. But it was not until the last quarter of the nineteenth century that the people of Britain as a whole began to realize that they had a duty to their fellows who were less fortunate than themselves.

There were several reasons for this new interest in social questions. One very important reason was that Parliament itself was more interested, as it began not only to represent the working classes, but to have working men among its members. Another reason was the good work done by many Churches and religious bodies. The Christian Socialists had done a great deal to bring the Church into touch with the poor. Large numbers of the middle-class manufacturers and tradesmen and artisans were Non-conformists, and in the chapels which they attended more and more attention was being given to social work. Many churches and chapels started “missions” in poor districts, and their members began to visit



General Booth, founder of the Salvation Army.

the homes of the slum dwellers, to arrange clubs and mothers' meetings, play centres, and to engage in many other activities.

In 1878 the Salvation Army was founded, and this

carried religion into the very poorest districts. The Army showed a noble example of what could be done in the way of social work by opening shelters, workshops, and soup kitchens for the homeless and hungry.

Another sign of the new spirit of sympathy was the founding of Social Settlements in the slums of the big cities. These were institutions in which men and women who themselves had the advantages of a good education, and who wanted to help their fellows, lived together and worked together, giving up their leisure and sometimes the whole of their time to learning how to help their poorer neighbours. Clubs and classes, nursing and visiting, entertainments and excursions—all these and many more activities were started by the Settlements, of which Toynbee Hall, Whitechapel, which was founded in 1885 in memory of Arnold Toynbee, was the most famous example.

“Behind and beneath the surface of society,” said the Home Secretary, Mr. Asquith, in 1893, “there is an ever larger field for a noble spirit of adventure. Behind and beneath the surface of society there are sights terrible, appalling, and yet inspiring for those who have eyes to see. The labourer who tills the fields which are not his own, season after season, in patient industry, with no home for his old age beyond the precarious bounty of public or private charity; the workgirl, old before her time, who lives a life worse than that of a mediæval serf, in the squalor of the sweater’s den; the little child who cowers in the cold and the darkness while it listens in terror for the unsteady step which is to it the signal of its parent’s homecoming. . . . While these things remain, there is work to be done, and there are spurs to be won, by



Toynbee Hall.

1. Reception Room. 2. Entrance. 3. Courtyard.

every soldier who has enlisted in the army of progress."

By the close of the century the "two nations" of whom Disraeli wrote were beginning to know and understand each other a little better.

But the kindness and sympathy and sacrifice which were shown in so many kinds of social work were not enough by themselves. It was very important that the great problems of poverty and bad housing, and sweated work and unemployment, should be solved in a business-like way. We spoke of the great work entitled *Life and Labour in London*, which Charles Booth published between 1889 and 1903.* This work,



Arnold Toynbee (1852-83).

(Copyright photo: H. J. Glaisher,
Wigmore Street.)

which contained carefully arranged facts and details about all the districts and employments, and conditions of life, in the metropolis, was the first great piece of "social investigation." The careful study of social problems was very important, and after Booth came Mr. and Mrs. Sidney Webb and many others, who

* See Chapter xv., page 234.

collected statistics and facts, and turned a brilliant spotlight on the dark places. A new study was created—sociology, or social science. The London School of Economics was one of the many institutions founded at this time where students could both learn economics and investigate the problems of poverty and unemployment.

At the end of the century, then, there were a great many classes of people who were at last beginning to get into touch with the poor and their needs—members of the reformed Parliament, Church workers of all kinds, men and women of education and culture who took up “social work” through the Settlements or in other ways, men and women of learning who consecrated their abilities to trying to find the causes of, and the remedies for, the evils of society.

It was clear to all those people that the day of complete *laissez faire* was over. Britain still believed in Free Trade—that is to say, she allowed foreign goods to come into this country free of tariff duties, so that people could buy the articles that were cheapest. In order to compete with the foreign goods which Free Trade encouraged, the British manufacturers had to make their own goods as cheap and plentiful as possible. The old school who believed in *laissez faire* said: “Do not interfere with these manufacturers. If we are to keep our trade prosperous, they must have a free hand with wages and hours of work.” The new school replied: “The health and happiness of human beings is more important even than trade returns. We believe that no employer should be allowed to ill-treat or underpay his workers. It is the duty of the State to look after all its citizens—to

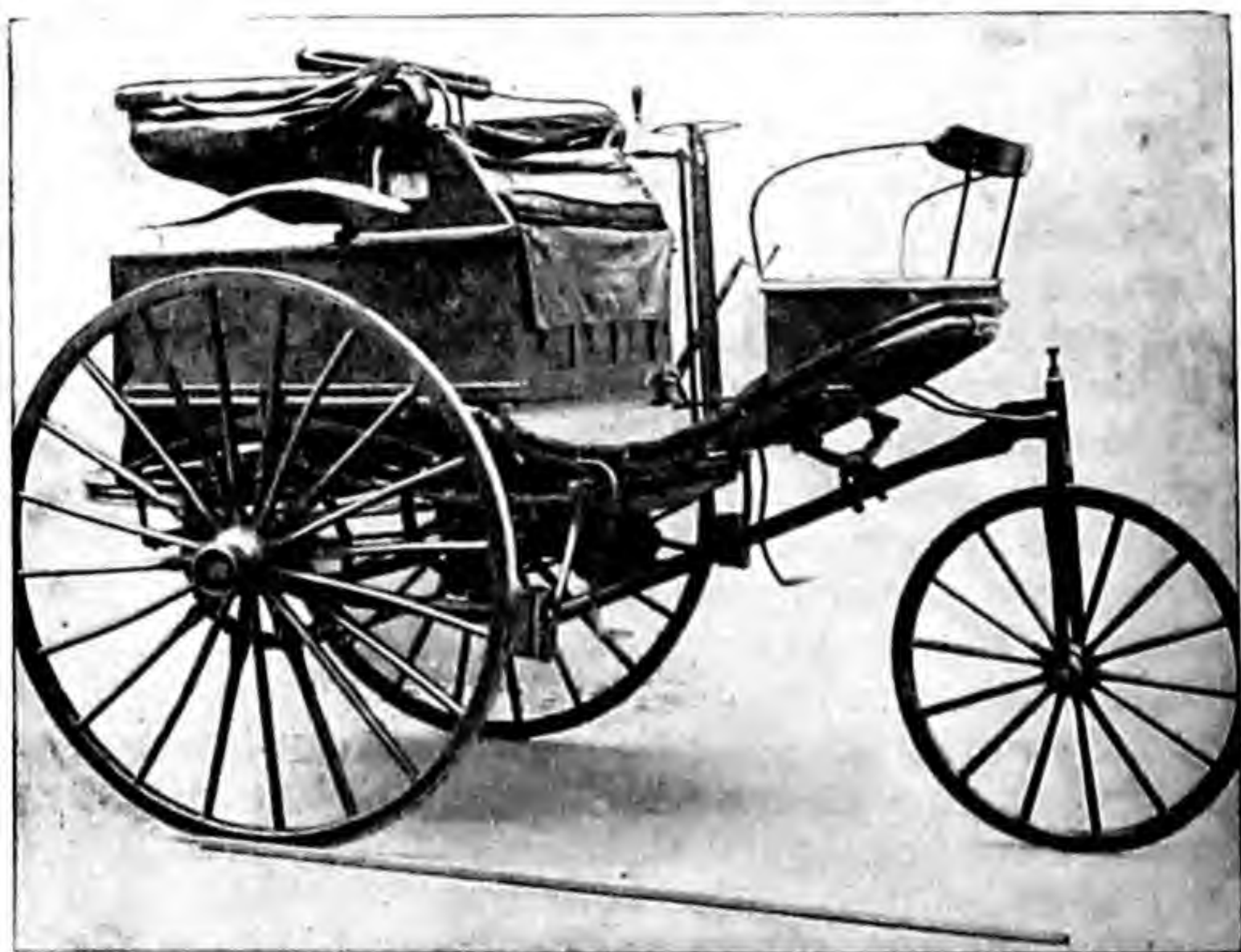
protect the poor, to encourage the good employers, and to punish the bad ones. In order to do all this the State must make laws and see that they are carried out."

It was in the nineties that these laws for the settlement of social problems began to be made. The Factory Acts were greatly improved. After 1867 nearly all factories and workshops were subject to the regulations, and factory inspectors were made responsible for seeing that the rules were carried out. In 1878 the hours of work were limited to fifty-six and a half in textile and sixty in other factories. No children were allowed to work under ten years of age. In 1891 another Act, with special rules about health, sanitation, and dangerous trades, was passed, and in 1895 and 1901 these rules were made still more rigid. Employers began to think it was the most natural thing in the world to whitewash their workrooms and fence round their machinery, to think about the health of their workers, and to be visited by inspectors. At the beginning of the nineteenth century all these things would have been considered a most unwarranted interference with the "freedom" and "rights" of an employer.

Employers were not left alone when the factory inspector had finished with them, for in 1880 and 1897 were passed Employers' Liability Acts, which made it the duty of employers to compensate workers who were injured during the course of their work. (In 1906 domestic servants were also included.) These Acts were intended to make employers more careful in avoiding accidents by providing "guards" for their machinery, inspecting their boilers, and seeing that

dangerous work was done only by experienced and very careful workers.

The Conservative Prime Minister, Disraeli, was responsible for carrying through many social reforms,



A motor-car of 1888.

This car had four seats and three wheels, two of which had iron tyres. The engine developed about one and a half horse-power, or less than that developed by the engine of a light-weight motor-cycle to-day.

among others the Public Health Act of 1875, about which he said, like Ecclesiastes, or the Preacher: "Sanitas sanitatis, omnia sanitas." * Again, the Hous-

* Ecclesiastes said (chapter i., verse 2): "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." Disraeli's phrase parodies the Preacher, and means: "All is sanitation."

ing Act of 1890 was only one of many Acts which tried to arrange for the better housing of the working classes and the clearing of the slums.

The end of the nineteenth century thus saw a strong movement in favour of social reform, as well as definite achievement on the part of the reformers. It was a good beginning. But it remained for the early part of the twentieth century to lead the way as a still greater age of social reform.

In 1906 the Liberals won a great victory at the election with the help of some of the Labour Party, and they framed a great programme of social reform, which was backed by both Liberal and Labour members. There was therefore a great mass of social legislation between 1906 and 1914, because these were the years when all the hopes of those who wanted to see a better Britain seemed to have a chance of fulfilment.

We have seen how three big problems had begun to weigh upon the minds of thoughtful citizens—bad factory conditions, sweated labour, and unemployment. The first of these had been remedied to a great extent by the Factory Acts of the nineties, but the other two remained for settlement by the reformers of the new century.

In 1909 the first attempt was made to solve the second of these problems—that is to say, to protect the workers, mostly women and young people, who worked in certain very badly-paid or “sweated” trades. For some time there had been an “Anti-Sweating League,” and it did much to prepare people’s minds for a great step forward. Under the Trade Boards Act of 1909 boards containing employers,

workmen, and neutral members * were set up in a few of the worst-paid trades, such as chain-making, lace finishing, box-making, and ready-made tailoring and shirt-making. These boards had the duty of fixing a minimum wage for each of these trades, and any employer paying less than the legal wage was liable to be prosecuted. Gradually more trades were included under the Act, until at present there are over forty. Most of these are trades in which the Trade-Unions are weak. As Lord Milner described the new measure: "It is a proposal that the State shall do for the weakest and most helpless trades what the strongly-organized trades already do for themselves."

This idea of a "minimum wage," which must be paid by all employers who were affected, dealt a death-blow to *laissez faire*. The State had now laid down not only how long an employer might employ his workers and what temperature they should work in, but even what wages he should pay them. Inspectors called at his factory to see that he was obeying the law. We cannot help wondering what Mr. Gradgrind, in Charles Dickens's novel, *Hard Times*, would have said to a factory or a trade board inspector.

In the "sweated" trades wages gradually rose. As more trades were brought in—dressmaking and millinery, laundry work, milk distribution, the making of aerated waters, boot repairing, and many others—the bad old conditions tended to disappear.

The biggest problem, then, that remained to be

* Members appointed by the Minister of Labour as possessing some knowledge of social conditions but quite impartial in their views. One of these "appointed" members acts as chairman, and their duty is to weigh the claims of both sides and vote according to the evidence.

solved was unemployment. There were already several measures which did something to relieve it. In 1908 Old Age Pensions were introduced, and this measure not only brought comfort and safety to thousands of old people, but it helped some of them to give up factory work for which they were too old, and make way for other younger workers who were unemployed.

An important measure for the relief of unemployment, however, was the Act of 1909, setting up Labour Exchanges or, as they were afterwards called, Employment Exchanges. There is now no district of a large city and no good-sized town without its Exchange, where workers who are unemployed, and employers who require workers, can register their wants. Through the Exchanges it is possible for workmen to hear of jobs in other towns, and sometimes their travelling expenses for long journeys are advanced to them.

It is through the Exchanges, too, that payment is made of unemployment insurance benefit. This has been, perhaps, the greatest social reform of the twentieth century. We all know what insurance means. It means the payment, week by week or year by year, to an insurance company of sums of money to provide against risks, such as fire or burglary, accident, sickness, or death. Should the event insured against not take place within the specified conditions, the insurance company keeps the money. If a fire breaks out, or an accident takes place, the insurance company pays for the damage. Insurance of all kinds was developing very rapidly in the twentieth century. Then the Government, through the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. Lloyd George, decided

to apply the ideas of insurance to industry. The first Insurance Act of 1911 was known as the Health Insurance Act. Practically all those working for



David Lloyd George as a young man.

wages between the ages of sixteen and seventy were obliged to insure against sickness. Each week the employer and the worker paid a small sum to the State, and to this sum the State added about a quarter. In return for these payments the workers got free medical

attendance, sanatorium treatment, sick and disablement pay, and other benefits.

In 1911 also a start was made with unemployment insurance in a few trades, such as building and engineering, in which, during certain seasons, unemployment was very common. The system was just the same—employer, worker, and State each paying their share of the insurance premiums. When the worker became unemployed he could draw unemployment insurance money for a certain number of weeks. This insurance scheme was extended until, by the Act of 1920, almost every trade was covered. In 1911 two and a half million workers were insured against unemployment, and benefit to the unemployed was paid out at 7s. 2d. a week. Later nearly twelve million workers were insured, and benefit was paid at 17s. a week for a single man, and extra for his dependents.*

Again, how startled most of the early Victorian employers would have been at a law which compelled them to help their workers in case they should be ill or out of work! We have dwelt on the Insurance Acts because they are such a very important piece of social legislation. They make compulsory by law three great ideas—self-help, by which the worker saves for the rainy day; help for others, by which the employer sets aside something for the benefit of the workers; and State responsibility for the health and sustenance of the working class. Our country was a pioneer both in Labour Exchanges and in Industrial Insurance, and many other countries have now followed her example.

* The Economy Act of 1931 reduced these benefits by 10 per cent., but this reduction has since been wholly restored.

In this period, then, when the conscience of Britain seemed at last to wake up fully, the workers were protected in old age, in accident, sickness, and unemployment. The conditions under which they worked were carefully inspected, and in many cases their wages were decreed by law. But there are some people who regard this legislation as "grandmotherly," and who think the State has done too much for the workers, and ought to leave them to help themselves, at least to a greater degree than the new legislation expected them to do. They objected to the employer's contribution to the insurance premium as an extra tax on industry, and to the contribution of the State as a further burden on the taxpayers of the country as a whole. Further objections were naturally raised when, in the early thirties, during a period of acute financial depression, it was found necessary to supplement the unemployment benefits by "borrowing" extra money from the Exchequer.

Thus, in the first three decades of the twentieth century, more and more laws were being passed, and more and more money spent in an attempt to raise the whole standard of life of the people.

The way in which the State took over so many duties was very welcome to the Labour Party, especially to those who had Socialist views, and a great deal of this legislation was due to the pressure which the growing number of Labour members put upon the Liberal Government. Even as early as 1894 Sir William Harcourt declared, "We are all Socialists now," because he had carried his Budget imposing death duties on large estates. Twenty years later this was much more true, for every Budget took money from

the rich and gave it to the poor, and nearly every important new law did something to make social conditions more equal. One of the most important ways in which the ideas of Socialism were put into practice was in municipal enterprise, and this we shall discuss in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 17.—LOCAL GOVERNMENT (1835-1929)

Local government before 1835—The Town Councils and County Councils Acts—Municipal Socialism—Growth of the Civil Service—Connection of the Government Departments and the Local Councils

“ A great city is that which has the greatest men and women,
If it be a few ragged huts it is still the greatest city in the whole
world.”

WALT WHITMAN: *Song of the Broad Axe* (1856).

THE city, town, or district in which we live plays a very important part in our lives. We are studying social history—that is to say, the history of how people live and work and play together—and one of the most interesting subjects in social history is that of local government. We share with our neighbours all kinds of services that are provided for us by the local council—our streets are paved, our rubbish is collected and disposed of, our park or playground is kept tidy and attractive. Sometimes we may have a public library, a swimming bath, or an “estate” on which “council houses” have been built.

Now, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, few of these services existed, and those which did exist were carried out in a very haphazard and unbusiness-like way. One of the chief characteristics of the nineteenth century was the way in which Parliament.

the national council, gave important additional duties of all kinds to the citizens of the locality—the local council—who gradually learned how to carry them out efficiently.

The system of local government before 1835 was not an organized system at all. There were no clear rules as to who should be responsible for certain affairs of the town or the village, with the result that most of the power got into the hands of a few men who were sometimes very corrupt and unscrupulous. In the first half of the century, as we have seen, the chief duty of the parish or borough was the relief of the poor. One of the most important parish officers was the beadle, and Dickens not only gives us a portrait of a typical beadle of the period in “Mr. Bumble” of *Oliver Twist*, but in another work, his *Sketches by Boz*, he describes the election of one particular beadle, when votes were given to the candidates in proportion to the number of their children! Now Dickens, as a novelist, naturally described highly coloured types or situations in order to draw attention to abuses which he wished to remove; but on the whole he is said to have drawn no highly exaggerated picture of social conditions.

Dickens shows that what we call “parochial” government was something rather petty and absurd, and full of its own importance, and there is no doubt that the business of the parish for most of the nineteenth century was carried on in a very fussy and stupid way. The country districts move more slowly than the towns, and it was in the towns that the reform of local government began. The great modern charter of our towns is the Municipal Corporations Act of

1835, which we may call the Town Councils Act. This was one of the first great measures of the reformed Parliament, and it followed immediately after the reform of the Poor Law.

By the Town Councils Act all the principal towns, except London, were brought into line, and one system of government was laid down for them all. Up to that time the affairs of a great many towns had been managed by corporations which were not usually elected by the townsmen, but were composed of a kind of "ring" of tradesmen or gentry, who sometimes did not even live in the town. What was needed was a good system of government based on election, and a system whereby all the social services which a city, or town, or district needed could be supplied by one council.

By the Act of 1835 Town Councils, which were to be elected by the ratepayers every three years, were set up in all towns. A mayor and aldermen were to be chosen by the council, and a town clerk and a borough treasurer appointed. Each town was given power to levy a general rate as well as a poor rate, to pay for the work which the council was called upon to do. It had charge of the paving, lighting, draining, and cleaning of the town, and control of the police force and the fire brigade. Gradually these councils began to arrange for a water supply, and made new streets, parks, and pleasure grounds. Later on they began to build public baths and wash-houses, public libraries, hospitals, schools, and dwelling-houses for the poor, or to embark on great enterprises, such as a system of tramways or the supply of gas or electricity.

Of course all these activities took a long time to

develop, and the statesmen who framed the Act of 1835 did not foresee the tremendous burden which would eventually fall upon the shoulders of the town councillors. But by the end of the century all the public services necessary for a town were, or could be, carried out by the Town Council, except the administration of justice and the licensing of public-houses, which were still in the hands of the magistrates.

This great increase in local government made a very great difference to the lives of the townspeople. All ratepayers, whatever their station in life, except public officials, had a chance of being elected councillors. It was a voluntary service, like that of the Justices of the Peace, and those who were elected to the council did much hard work for which they received no payment, but they learned much of the art of government. And there grew up among them a great sense of loyalty to one's town or borough. The doings of the Town Council were fully reported in the local papers, every one was naturally interested in the way that the rates went up or down, and rivalry grew up between towns as to the cheapness of their lighting, or the attractions of their parks, or the beauty of their public buildings. This is what we mean by "civic spirit," which comes second only to "patriotism" or a wise "national spirit." A great many men who served their country as statesmen first learned the art of government on the Town Council. Joseph Chamberlain, for instance, was Mayor of Birmingham; and John Burns was a very active member of the London County Council.

We have seen how, towards the end of the nineteenth century, when a great desire for social reform

had sprung up, Parliament began to be busier than it had ever been before—discussing reforms, passing laws, and voting money to pay for having these laws carried out. One of the reasons why local government became so important was that Parliament had so much business to deal with that it began to hand over some of its tasks to the men who were on the spot—to the



Birmingham Town Hall.

Town Councils. A great many duties which were first performed by Parliament were, in the latter half of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, handed over to the local councils. The most important of these duties was that of providing for national education.*

In 1888 another step forward was taken, and the County Councils Act set up County Councils.

* See Chapter 18, page 273.

During the fifty years after the Town Councils Act of 1835 the country-side was still governed, so far as it was governed at all, by the Justices of the Peace. But under the new County Councils, which became very important bodies, this plan was superseded. All incorporated towns having a population of 50,000 or more could become County Boroughs,* and their councils would then have the same duties as a County Council, of which the County Boroughs were to be practically independent.

The County Councils now look after matters concerning the whole county, including schools, main roads and road bridges, and county asylums; they divide the county into polling districts, appoint coroners and medical officers of health, maintain the county police, and make bye-laws for those parts of the county not controlled by the County Boroughs. These are only a few of their functions. The county hall, where the council meets, is like a local parliament house, and the decisions that are made there are very important in the everyday life of the people.

In 1894 District Councils, Urban and Rural, and Parish Councils were formed, which took over such of the work from the County Council as could be managed by smaller local bodies, chiefly in connection with the upkeep of local roads and the carrying out of the Acts about sanitation and health.

We must remember that the local councils, however important they are, have no power to make laws,

* By the Local Government Act of 1926 the minimum of population was increased to 75,000, and it became necessary to obtain a special Act of Parliament for the creation of any new County Borough.

except what are known as *bye-laws*, such as those which a railway company can make. They exist to carry out laws made by Parliament, and not to make them. There are certain Acts, such as those for establishing public libraries, or a scheme of allotments, which a local council can "adopt" or not as it pleases. But if a council wants to embark upon a big enterprise, such as the supply of gas, electricity, or a tramway system, it has to get a Private Bill passed by Parliament.

The doings of the local councils are carefully supervised by the Government Departments. Matters such as public health and housing are supervised by the Ministry of Health, education by the Board of Education, police by the Home Office, and so on. Grants of money are sometimes made by the Government to help a "local authority" (*i.e.* a council) to pay for an expensive scheme, and the Ministry of Health, or some other Department, supervises the way in which the money is spent.

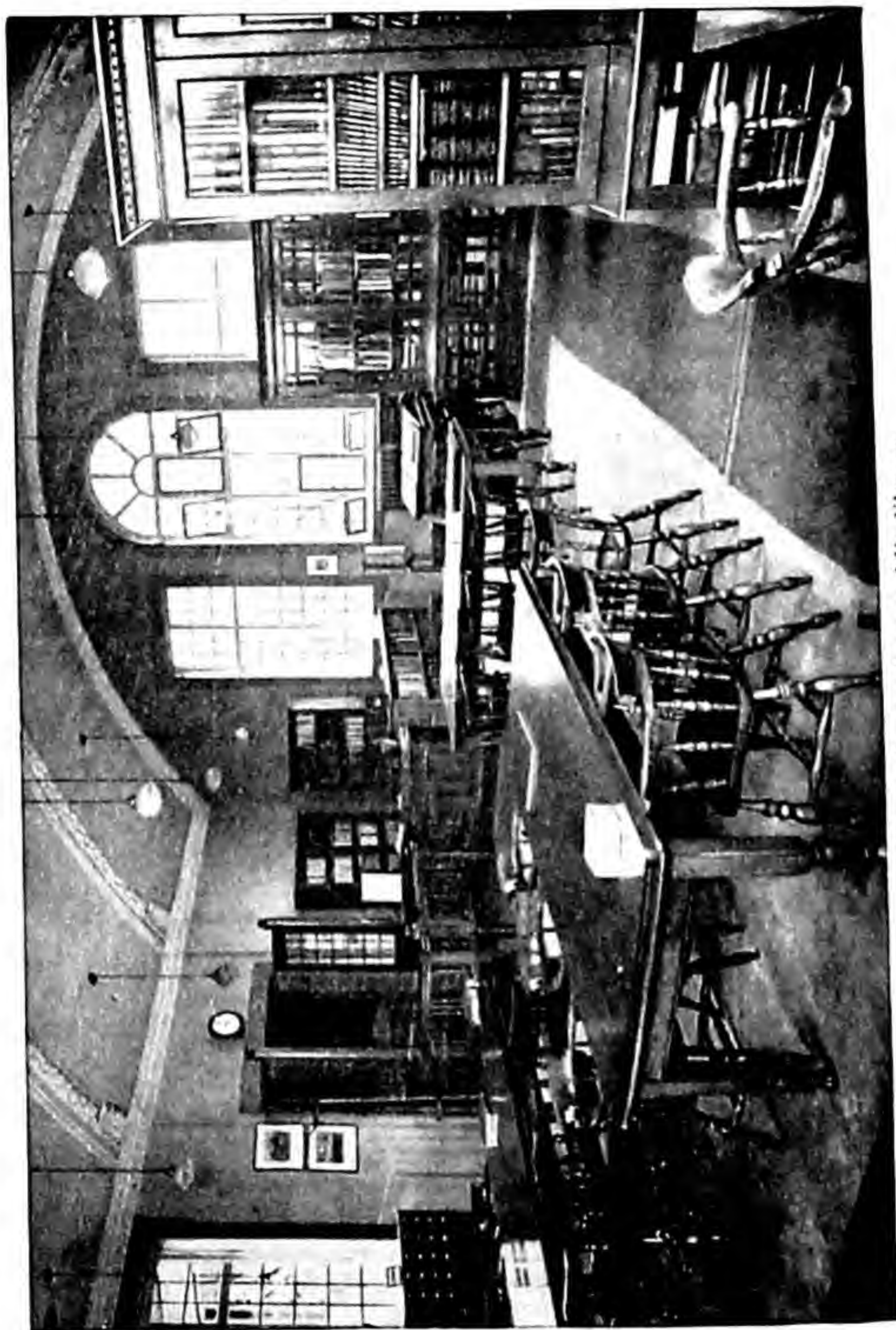
We saw in Chapter 12 how the whole system of the relief of the poor was reformed by the Poor Law Act of 1834. The Boards of Guardians which were set up then for every "union" of parishes dealt with the relief of the poor, either by providing workhouses, or by giving "out-relief" or medical aid. They controlled the spending of the poor rate, but they themselves were advised and controlled by the Local Government Board or, later on, the Ministry of Health. It seemed to many very foolish and wasteful to have these Boards of Guardians sitting for special functions and for special districts, being separately elected, and doing work which could be done by a committee of

the local council. This rather complicated state of affairs was altered by the Local Government Act of 1929, which gave to the County Councils and County Boroughs all the duties previously undertaken by the Boards of Guardians.*

In every way, then, local government grew in importance during the early years of the twentieth century. Four other Acts added greatly to this importance—the Education Acts of 1902 and 1918, and the Town Planning Acts of 1909 and 1919. By the Education Act, as we shall see in the next chapter, all the State schools were put under the control of the Borough or County Councils, working through their Education Committees. The schools built by the councils are known as Council schools, and are supported by the proceeds of an Education rate and a grant from the Government. The Education Acts placed a great responsibility on the local authority, which had to take control of all the public education of the district. The Town Planning and other Housing Acts allow a local authority to build houses suitable for working-class dwellings, to close houses which are unfit to live in, to make schemes for improving and beautifying a town, and to acquire land for laying out public streets, open spaces, or garden cities.

All these improvements may seem very ordinary to us, but try to imagine what the town or country dweller of the early nineteenth century would think

* See Chapter 12, page 165. Under this Act "poor relief" is called "public assistance," and is dealt with by a Public Assistance Committee of the County Council; a very significant and important change in social history.

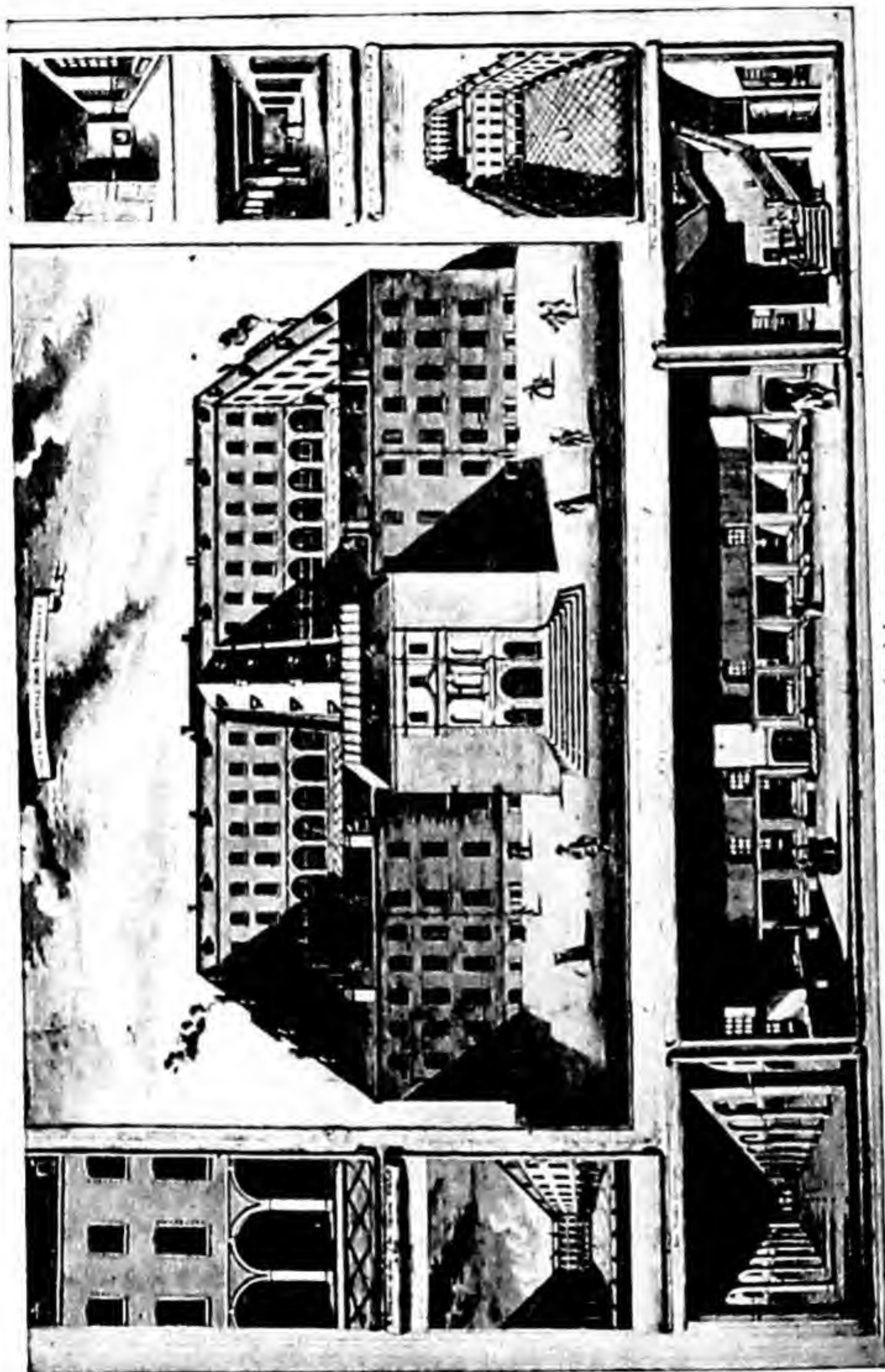


View of a modern public library.

of them if he could pay us a visit! If he could have lived in a house on a pretty and well-built housing estate, supplied with good water, gas, and electric light; if he could have gone his way at night-time along well-lighted roads patrolled by police; if he could have sent his children to an airy and well-lighted school, he would have thought that the millennium or the Golden Age had come.

As time went on more and more power was given to the local councils, and this development led to the growth of what was sometimes called "municipal Socialism"—the system under which the citizens of the town, through their Town Councils, become employers and manufacturers on a large scale. They build and manage libraries, baths and wash-houses, museums, parks, and allotments; they run trams or omnibuses, and supply gas, electricity, and water. Many Socialists believed in "nationalization"—the ownership by the State of the things that "produce"—the land, the mines, the factories, and so on. When such things as land, gas-works, and reservoirs began to be owned by the local council of a town, it seemed to many people that a half-way house to State Socialism had been reached.

A great many people disapproved of such changes for many reasons, but this particular kind of Socialism spread very rapidly, until the local councils provided free dinners and medical attention for school children, free advice for mothers, free milk for babies, and many other things. More money had to be raised to pay for these services, and during the twentieth century rates in all the big towns gradually rose higher and higher. Some thought that many people were getting



Guy's Hospital in 1725.
(From a contemporary print in the Grace Collection.)

too many free gifts—that they were “spoon-fed,” and would appreciate these benefits more if they were not so easy to get; and they wondered how long the rate-payers would be able to carry on business at all when more and more burdens were being laid upon them. We state both sides of the question as a matter of history, leaving you to debate it in your own way.

Behind local government are the great Government Departments, with Ministers at their head, working through the Civil Service, and their main duty is to see that laws which Parliament passes, and which may be taken to express the will of the nation as a whole, are carried out.

All through the nineteenth century many of these Departments existed—the Foreign Office, the Treasury, the Home Office, the Admiralty, the War Office, and others. Other Departments, such as the India Office and the Board of Education, were created during the century. At the beginning of the century the Departments were not overburdened with work. Dickens and Thackeray both poked fun at the typical Civil Servant, who was usually depicted as lazy, stupid, and slow. But as Parliament began to pass more laws, and as the State began to busy itself with matters that the early Victorians cared little for—health, housing, education, industry—and as civilized life became more and more complicated, and the country more and more crowded, the Departments grew busier and busier. In the middle of the century examinations for entering into the Civil Service began, and these helped to bring in more keen and intelligent men. A large class of paid and trained officials came into being—secretaries, inspectors, clerks, and others, and

these became the real Executive Government of the country.

The growth of the Civil Service was perhaps as important as the growth of local government, and there was a close connection between the two. Many of the Government Departments have the duty of keeping an eye on the doings and expenditure of the local councils, and helping them with money and advice. The Ministry of Health supervises the Housing and Sanitary and Public Assistance Committees of a council ; the Board of Education is concerned with its Education Committee ; the Ministry of Transport with its Highways Committee ; the Home Office with its Watch Committee ; the Ministry of Pensions and the Ministry of Labour with the Pensions, Juvenile Employment, and Insurance Committees. Thus there has gradually grown up a very close connection between the State and the local councils of town and county. But there are many people who see dangers to the nation as a whole in the growth of what is sometimes called bureaucracy, or government by paid officials ; and it is the duty of all who are concerned with the welfare of the nation as a whole to watch all developments in government with a somewhat critical eye.

CHAPTER 18.—EDUCATION (1780-1930)

Education in the eighteenth century—Education during the Industrial Revolution—Sunday schools—Lancaster and Bell—The public schools and Dr. Arnold—Education Act of 1870—The Board of Education—Girls' schools—Education Act of 1902—University extension

Ye fill up the gaps in our files,
Strengthen the wavering line,
'Stablish, continue our march,
On, to the bound of the waste,
On, to the City of God."

MATTHEW ARNOLD: *Rugby Chapel* (1857).

THE astonishing difference which we see between the Britain of 1800 and of 1900 is due not so much to material changes—the spread of machinery, the raising of the general standard of living, and so on—as to the improvement in education.

One of the Christian Socialists, when an old man in 1892, was asked what improvement he saw in the condition of the people, and he replied: "I think the condition of the working class has changed immensely, but not so much as the change in public opinion. I find now that boys and girls fresh from school are at a point of advancement in relation to this question which, in 1848, we could not bring grown-up people to, and were considered heretics and revolutionists for trying to bring them to." What he meant



Rochdale Grammar School in 1840.

was that the children of 1892 were better instructed and had more general knowledge than the grown-up people of 1848.

We need not dwell very long upon public education in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. For the poorer classes it did not exist, and most of those who were comfortably off cared little for intellectual things. Luck had placed England first in the race for material wealth, and for a long time she outdistanced all competitors. The time had not yet come when prosperity was to be the reward of those who knew best how to use their brains.

The universities of Oxford and Cambridge had declined very much in numbers, and in their standard of learning. In the days of the Civil War there had been nearly twice as many students. In the eighteenth century the universities were in the hands of the clergy and the aristocracy. Roman Catholics and Dissenters were prevented by law from taking degrees at Oxford and Cambridge, which were the only universities in England. The examinations for degrees were more or less of a farce, and the students spent their time in enjoying themselves, with a few brilliant exceptions.

The boys' public schools and the grammar schools were also in a bad plight. They had fewer pupils between 1750 and 1840 than ever before, and they offered a very poor education. The boys were taught Latin and Greek only, except that they were sometimes allowed to amuse themselves by learning a little French, arithmetic, or drawing. There was little or no schooling for girls.

During the early part of the nineteenth century

Dr. Keate was headmaster of Eton. The boys were so unruly that Sunday after Sunday they shouted him down when he tried to read sermons to the school assembly. Rats would be let loose in the chapel, and the next day a batch of boys would stand in a queue ready for the whipping-block. Headmasters were always pictured as carrying a bundle of birch twigs. On many occasions open rebellion broke out at the big public schools, and in 1770 the Riot Act had to be read at Winchester. The making of Latin verse, playing practical jokes, and making acquaintance with the birch seemed to form the basis of education for most English boys.

But as the Industrial Revolution brought wealth to a large new middle class, and trade and manufacture became all-important, there grew up a demand for an education wider than that which was given at the public schools and grammar schools. A number of "academies for young gentlemen" were set up, which taught English, arithmetic, and history and other subjects, as well as a little Latin. Even "young ladies" were not quite neglected, and boarding schools were started for some of them at the end of the eighteenth century, although, as one writer of the time puts it, "A taste for the sciences rendered women singular, and sundered them from the simplicity of their domestic duties and from the society of which they are an ornament." They were not taught very much, or very well. One typical girls' school at the end of the eighteenth century advertised "board, lodging, washing, reading, plain and fine needlework"—with writing and dancing as optional subjects. Some of these private schools, however, did very good work in show-

ing that Latin and Greek were not the only subjects worthy of study.

As for the children of the poor, they stood very little chance of getting any education at all. At the time of the Industrial Revolution they worked such long hours that they had no time or strength for learning lessons. You will remember how Robert Owen, at the very beginning of the nineteenth century, started infant schools and day schools for his factory children, but there was hardly any one to follow his example.

Some of these children gained a little book knowledge by going to Sunday schools, which were started by Robert Raikes in 1780. Here, in addition to Bible knowledge, the children picked up scraps of information, and sometimes learned to read. Mrs. Trimmer and Hannah More were two ladies who founded Sunday schools for the poor which had great success. There were also little dame schools, "ragged" schools, and others, often meeting in a tiny room or cellar, and taught by teachers who knew little more than their pupils.

The factory children came off best, because Parliament did try to provide for their education in special schools. But even as late as 1850 an inspector wrote about one of these factory schools: "The utter incapacity of the teacher; the small, crowded room; the scarcity of books, and the tattered and dirty condition of those they have; the larger proportion of the children doing absolutely nothing for nine-tenths of the time they are under confinement; the noise, and the close and tainted atmosphere—these things render a visit to such mock schools a most painful duty. . . ."

You will easily see that exactly the same obstacle stood in the way of education as at first prevented the reform of the factories and of the prisons—the idea of *laissez faire*. The State took a very long time to decide that it ought to educate the people even as a matter of safety for law and order, for ignorance is

always dangerous. For a long time all education was left to private individuals and philanthropists. Very few people cared about education at the time of the Industrial Revolution. They thought, as we have said more than once, that money was everything, and did not realize that education can make a good man of business still better at his chosen work. When any one tried to suggest that all children should



Joseph Lancaster.

be educated free, and be obliged to go to school, he was met by such arguments as: "Knowledge only makes people restless and disinclined for useful work," or, "Parents are the best judges of how much education their children need," or, still more often, "Where is the money to come from?"

We saw how much factory reform owed to the pioneer work of Robert Owen, prison reform to John Howard, and the reform of the laws to Jeremy

Bentham. Just in the same way it was not the State or the prominent statesmen but a few obscure individuals who laid the foundation of a national system of English education.* Following on the work of Robert Raikes with his Sunday schools, came the life work of two men, Joseph Lancaster (1778-1838) and Andrew Bell (1753-1832).

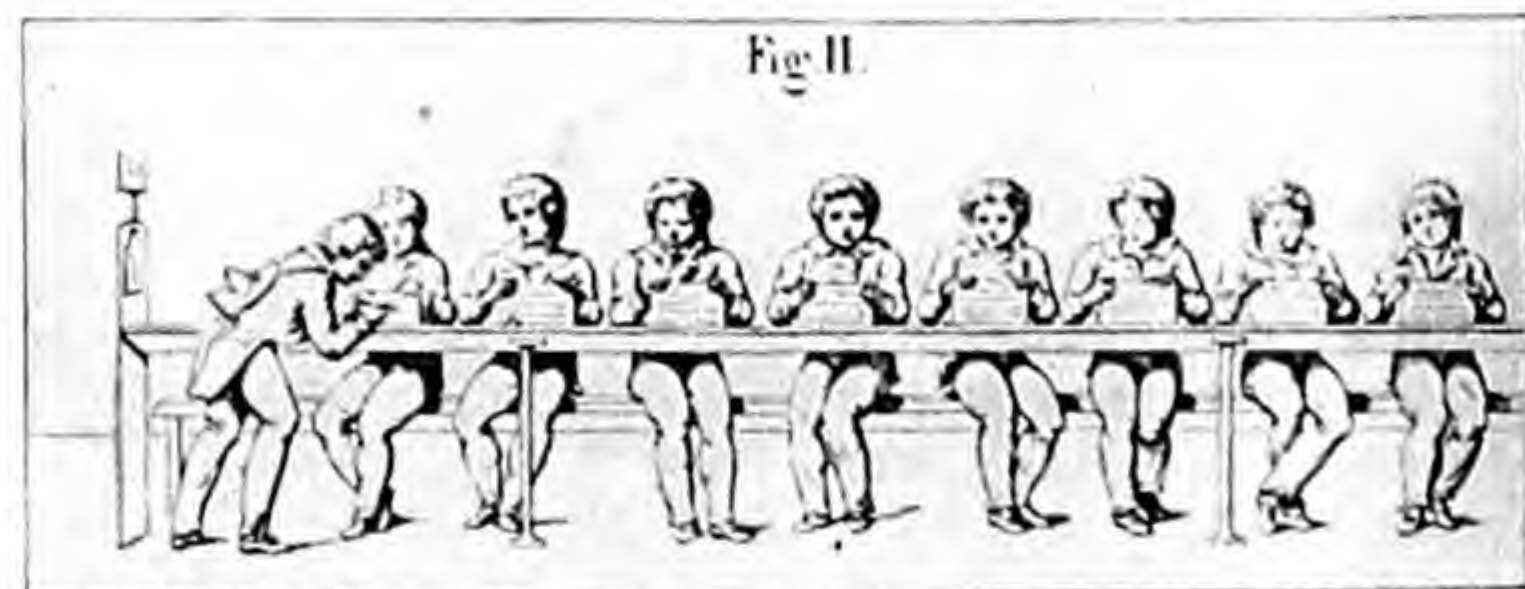
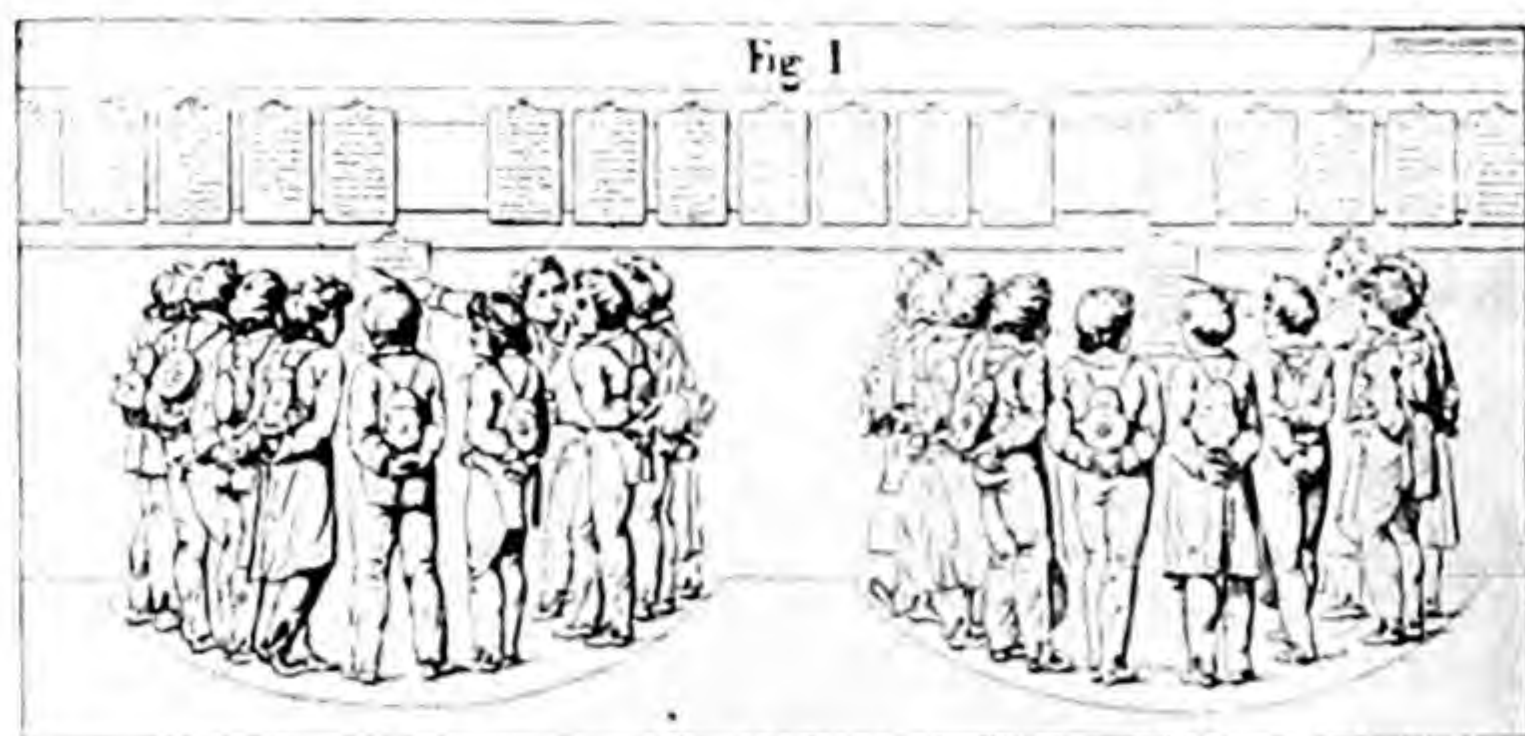
Lancaster was a Quaker who, in 1796, started a school in his father's house in Southwark for teaching reading, writing, and arithmetic to poor children for a fee of fourpence a week. The school grew and flourished, and about twenty years later Lancaster founded a society, afterwards called the "British and Foreign School Society," with the object of providing schools "for the education of the Labouring and Manufacturing Classes of Society of every religious persuasion."

Bell was a Churchman, and, aided by the clergy, he founded, in 1811, the "National Society for promoting the education of the Poor in the principles of the Established Church." These two societies, with



Dr. Bell.

* Scotland had maintained a good system of public education since the time of John Knox (1505-72).



Monitors teaching their classes (1813).

(JOSEPH HAMEL: *Der Gegenseitige Unterricht*, 1818.)

(Dr. Joseph Hamel was sent to England by Alexander I. of Russia in 1813 to study the monitorial system.)

such long and pompous names, became the parents of the "British" and "National" schools, which together formed the bulk of the "Voluntary" schools at work before public education became compulsory.

Both Lancaster and Bell used a system in their schools by which the older boys and girls became

monitors, and were used to repeat to the younger ones the lessons they themselves had learnt. The system was not very efficient, but it must be remembered that there were hardly any good teachers in those days, and it was necessary for the pioneers to make the best of the prevailing conditions.

Unfortunately there was keen rivalry between the schools of Lancaster, or the "British" schools, and those of Bell, or the "National" schools, on grounds of religion. The British schools were what we call "undenominational"—that is to say, they did not teach the doctrines of any one religious body; the National schools were largely supported by members of the Church of England, and taught the doctrines of that Church.

It was a creditable thing that by means of these two societies hundreds of schools were founded and supported by voluntary subscriptions. Although the spread of education was probably the most important of all social reforms, the State was at first quite content to leave it to private charity. But in 1833 the Government gave a grant of £20,000 to the two societies, and this was really the beginning of State-aided education. In 1839 an Education Department was formed, and the grant to the schools increased year by year, although it was never more than half the amount collected from voluntary subscribers.

Thanks, then, to the work of Bell and Lancaster and their supporters, many children got some sort of education before the Education Act of 1870. In 1854 we are told that the scholars gained an "imperfect power of reading, a yet more imperfect power of writing, and an acquaintance with the first three or

four rules of arithmetic." Yet in many districts there was no school; many children attended only for a year, or perhaps two years; and factory children either received no education, or by the half-time system tried

to do lessons at school for half the day after working in a mill or factory for the other half.

But the day schools for poorer children were not the only schools which needed reforming. The big public boarding schools for boys were also at a low ebb. Fortunately, at the same time that Bell and Lancaster lived and worked, there lived two great headmasters who brought a new spirit into the public schools—Samuel Butler of



Dr. Thomas Arnold.
(From the painting by Thomas Phillips, R.A.)

Shrewsbury (1774-1839), and Dr. Arnold of Rugby (1795-1842).

Both these headmasters, like Bell and Lancaster, gave the older boys authority over the younger, but instead of teaching or keeping order in class they were made prefects, with authority over the other boys out of school hours, and were consulted by the headmaster about the government of the school. Under Butler and Arnold the curriculum became very much enlarged, and history, geography, mathematics and

other subjects were taught along with the traditional Latin and Greek. Dr. Arnold's great ideal was to "make the school a place of really Christian education." In Rugby School Chapel, we read, "with the morning sun shining on the freshly scrubbed faces of his three hundred pupils, or in the dusk of the evening, through a glimmer of candles, his stately form, rapt in devotion, or vibrant with exhortation, would dominate the scene."* Character and conduct became more important than mere book-learning to Dr. Arnold and those who followed in his steps, though they did not neglect what is known as scholarship.

By the middle of the century, then, things had taken a turn for the better in educational affairs. Over two million children were attending school, even though the majority of them left before they were eleven, and received only the bare rudiments of instruction. There was a widespread desire for more schools and better education, and once the people themselves wanted schools and had the vote they were bound to get them.

In 1870, only three years after the working classes were given the vote, a great Education Act was passed. At last education, instead of being a gift provided for the poor by charitable people, became one of the great "public services" provided by the State, to which every child had a right.

The Act of 1870 was passed because, as was said in Parliament, "Notwithstanding the large sums of money we have voted, we find a vast number of children badly taught or utterly untaught, because there

* *Eminent Victorians*, by G. Lytton Strachey.

are too few schools and too many bad schools, and because there are large numbers of parents in this country who cannot or will not send their children to school." The Act set up local "School Boards" elected by the ratepayers, which had power to build and maintain schools in their areas and, if they wished, to compel all children between the ages of five and thirteen * to attend. These schools were called Board schools. Ten years later elementary education was made compulsory, and in 1891 it was made free of cost to the parents, except in so far as they were ratepayers and taxpayers, for some one must eventually pay even for "free" education.

Notwithstanding these advances, England still lagged behind Germany and other countries in her system of education. This was partly due to the system of *laissez faire* which she took so long to shake off, and partly to the disagreements about religious teaching which prevented educational development. At first the "Church schools," which Bell and his followers had founded, were not assisted by the rates as the "Board schools" were; but since the passing of the Act of 1902 they also have been "maintained" by the local Education Authority. The Board schools became Council schools under the same Act, which abolished the School Boards and gave the control of education to the County Councils and the larger Borough Councils, acting through their Education Committees.

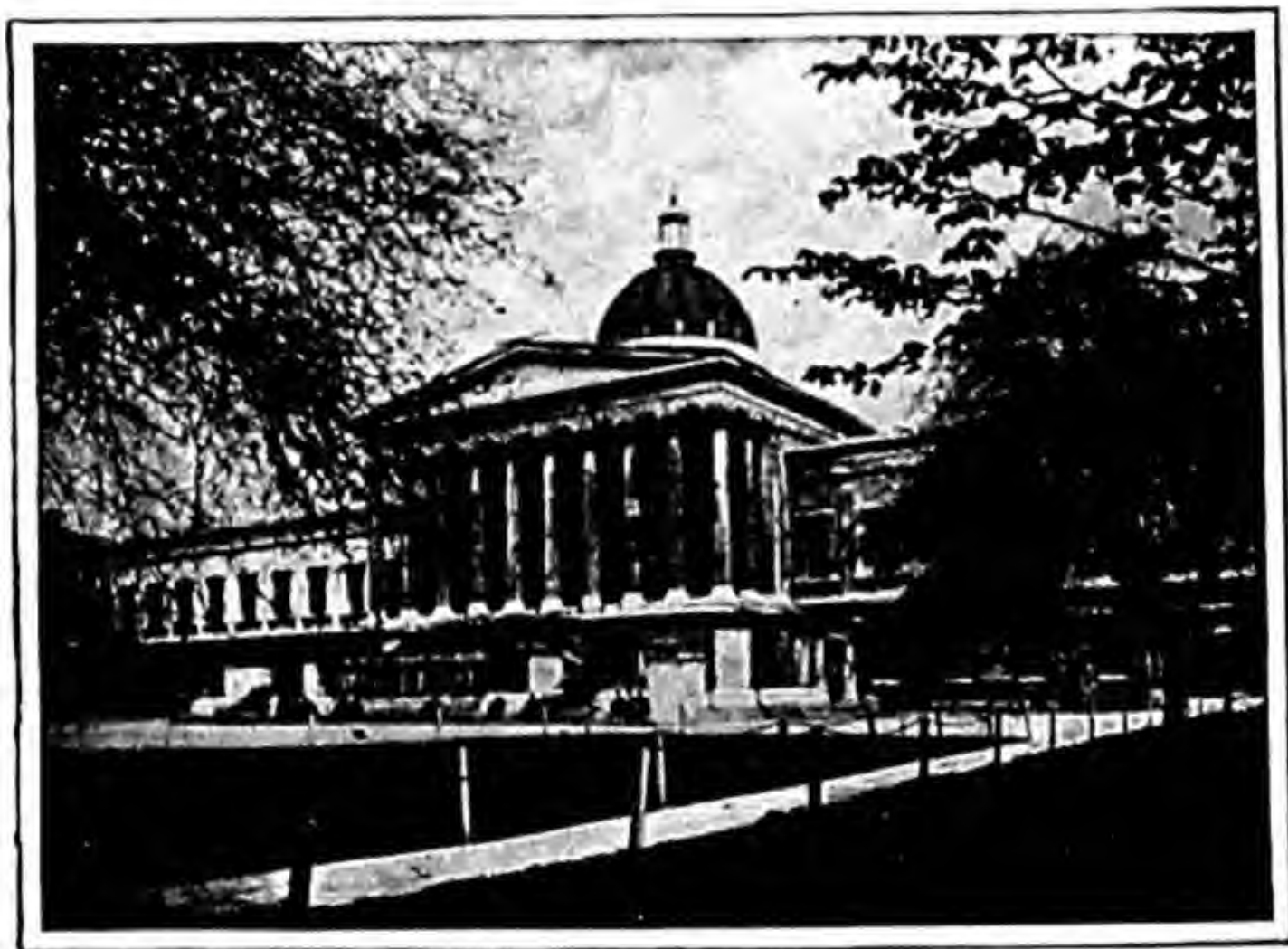
* The school-leaving age has since been raised to fourteen, and now, by the Education Act of 1936, children must stay at school until they are fifteen unless granted an exemption by their local authorities on the grounds of having obtained beneficial employment.

There has probably been no more startling change during the last century than the change from the little dame school in a tiny kitchen or cellar to the modern school with its fine classrooms. Once the State made up its mind to take charge of education it did its work very thoroughly! In 1899 the Board of Education was established, and gradually, as Parliament grew more keen on social services, the schools provided not only free instruction, but also free medical service, free dental treatment, and even free meals for those children who needed them.

The Britain of the early nineteenth century allowed many of her children to grow up uneducated, overworked and underfed, but the Britain of the twentieth century provides a good education for all children, will not allow them to work for their living until they are old enough and strong enough to do so, and does all it can to produce healthy and intelligent citizens.

The period of the great Education Acts of 1870 and 1902, which organized a national scheme of education, saw also the rise of seven new universities, in addition to Oxford and Cambridge, and the rapid development of the University of London, which had been founded in 1828. There was also a great improvement in girls' schools, and women's colleges were started at the universities. In 1865 it was said that "there are scarcely any good schools, there are very few good teachers, there is no motive offered to girls for study." By the end of the century girls' high schools and other day and boarding schools flourished everywhere. Girls were no longer considered to be educated when they could read and write, sew and

dance, and paint a little. They studied the same subjects as boys, and prepared to take their place in the world as workers and good citizens. Nothing has made a greater difference to our social and family life than the fact that girls now go to as good schools as their brothers.



University College, London.

(Reproduced by kind permission of Messrs. Cassell.)

Several Commissions of Inquiry were appointed during the last half of the nineteenth century to investigate the condition of the schools. The public schools and grammar schools were brought into line with modern requirements by giving more attention to modern subjects like mathematics, modern languages, and science.

Until the twentieth century there were very few schools for the working-class boy or girl of fourteen who wanted to continue at school. After the 1902 Act, however, a great many secondary schools were set up by the County and Borough Councils, and a large number of scholarships were offered by which the brightest boys and girls could go from an elementary school to a secondary school, and then to a university or technical college, or to a training college for teachers.

Nor was it only the children who benefited by the new enthusiasm for education. Quite early in the nineteenth century "Mechanics' Institutes" and "Working Men's Clubs" had been started, with evening classes and lectures. Later on, the universities began to arrange for lectures and classes within their own districts. This movement was known as the University Extension Movement, and it was followed by the Workers' Educational Association, new Working Men's Colleges, and other institutions for bringing the best teaching within the reach of every one who desired it.

Very few of the wonderful changes which the nineteenth century brought would have been possible if there had not been this great advance in education. Instead of paying a penny a week or little more to have their children "taught" by some old woman or needy pensioner, parents were able, at the expense of the community as a whole, to send their children to good schools, have them attended by good doctors, and receive advice and help in finding work for them on leaving school.

After the Reform Bill of 1867, which gave the vote

to the working class, there arose a cry, "Educate your masters." This was spoken partly in jest and partly in anger, but behind it lay the fact that the greatest power in the State of the future must rest with the



Right Hon. W. E. Forster
Who brought in the Education Act of 1870.

working-class citizens, because they had the vote and outnumbered the other classes. Nothing was therefore more important than to see that the children—the men and women of the future—received an education which would fit them for sound citizenship.

“ Educate your masters ” was the half-serious joke of the “ seventies.” Fifty years later the cry was for the “ broad highway of education ”—the opportunity for every able child, of whatever class, to go from the infant school to the university. It is the growth of this liberal spirit which makes it right for us to call this period (1867-1914) the period of “ Progress.”

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PART IV.—OUR OWN TIME (1914-45)

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CHAPTER 19.—THE GREAT WAR AND ITS RESULTS (1914-18)

Discontent before the war—Women's Suffrage movement—
Industry during the war : prices and wages, State control,
employment of women—Difficulties created by the war
—Reconstruction in politics and industry—Acts of 1918

" Now, God be thanked who has matched us with His hour,
And caught our youth, and wakened us from sleeping,
With hand made sure, clear eye, and sharpened power,
To turn, as swimmers, into cleanness leaping,
Glad from a world grown old and cold and weary . . . "

RUPERT BROOKE : " 1914 " (1887-1915).

JUST before the outbreak of the greatest war in history there was a good deal of jarring and creaking in our social and industrial system. Although the country as a whole was rich and prosperous, there was, as there always had been, a great deal of poverty and discontent.

The workers were better paid and better educated than ever before, and they had more leisure to study and discuss the questions of the hour. Socialism was growing stronger, and there was a movement afoot for giving the wage-earners a share in the management and even the profits of certain industries. The arrangement by which there was a rigid division between employers and employed did not always work well, and it was much criticized. This discontent bore fruit in many strikes and disputes in industry.

Another cause of restlessness was the life of luxury led by many people. This state of affairs was especially evident in the years just before the war, and it was in the mind of Mr. Lloyd George when he said, just after the outbreak of war: "A great flood of luxury and of sloth which had submerged the land is receding, and a new Britain is appearing. We can see for the first time the fundamental things of life that matter, and that have been obscured from our vision by the tropical growth of prosperity." This expression, "the tropical growth of prosperity," very well describes the condition of certain classes of people in Britain during the early years of our century.

The workers were not the only people who felt irritated by the jarring and jolting of the social system. Women in the days of Queen Victoria had been kept in their homes as far as possible. They were not allowed to vote in Parliamentary elections; they were not allowed to be barristers, or architects, or university teachers, or engineers, or magistrates—nearly every profession was closed to them except that of school teaching. When they worked in factories, or for wages in their own houses, they were often very badly paid, and earned much less than men, even when employed on the same job.

At the beginning of the twentieth century there were a few women doctors, and there were beginning to be more and more women clerks and typists and shop assistants; but before the war, except for a few hundred specially trained women, the only place where women were welcome was in the worst-paid jobs of industry.

For years the feeling had grown among women

that now they had better education and training they should be allowed the same privileges of citizenship as men enjoyed. The years before the war were marked by a furious struggle for "Votes for Women." Just as the workers joined Trade-Unions and organized strikes for better wages and shorter hours, so thousands of women joined the Suffrage Societies, and fought in every kind of way—by meetings and processions, by violence and attacks on property—to win the vote. It was another Chartist movement, and like the Chartists, the Suffragists were very unpopular at first, but in the end, as we shall see, their demands were granted in the ordinary course of events.

We have said enough to show that when war broke out in 1914 a great part of the population was very dissatisfied. And yet, so strong was the mysterious spirit which we call patriotism, that nearly all these dissatisfied people showed great loyalty to the State against which they had so many grievances, and either fought or worked for their country.

The World War of 1914 to 1918 was on so great a scale, and caused such an upheaval in every part of our lives, that it would take a whole book to describe its effects. We must first select a few of the changes due to the war which have altered the course of our social and industrial history. As we do this we must remember that, as in the case of the war with Napoleon, the Great War was not fought on English soil. Unlike those of the Continental nations, Britain's factories and her coalfields and her shipyards were able to go on working all the time. The workers at home did not have the enemy at their very gates, and even when they suffered from lack of food and from attacks by

aeroplanes and airships, they were on the whole much better off than the workers of other nations.

The greatest changes which the war brought to the industrial life of the country fall under three heads: the change in prices and wages, the control of industry by the State, and the employment of women. We will take these in order.

War, of course, meant, as it had meant a hundred years before, very high prices. The factories and mines were busy making munitions and clothing for the army, and all the other things necessary for carrying on war. Owing to the submarine campaign, Britain found it more and more difficult to import foodstuffs. The supplies from Germany and, to a great extent, from Russia, were cut off. Food and clothing of every kind was very scarce and dear. During and after the war prices rose to more than double, and in 1920, when they were at their highest, the "cost of living" was 176 per cent. above the level of 1914.

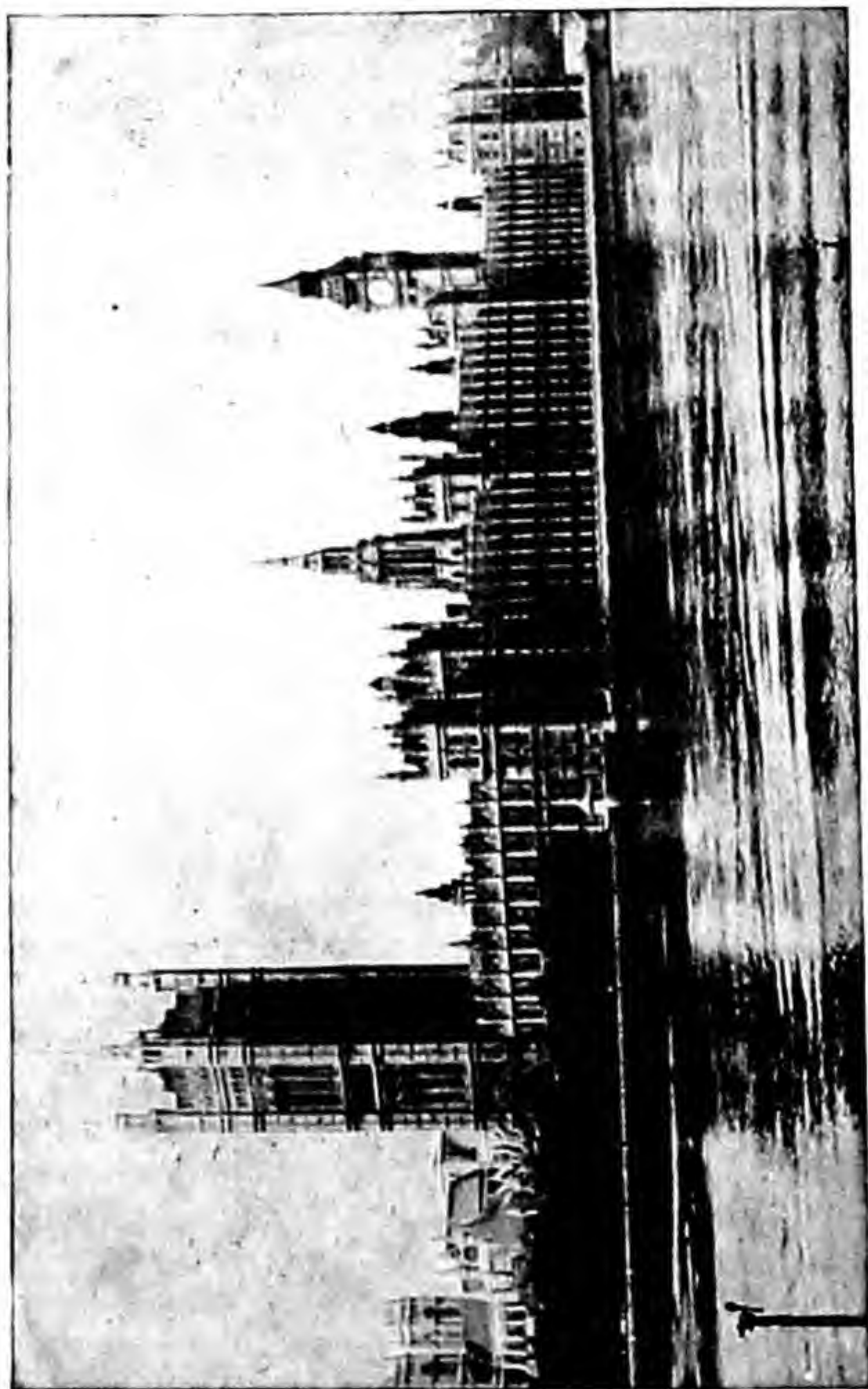
When we hear our mothers and grandmothers speak of the time when eggs were less than 1*d.* each, kippers 1½*d.* a pair, Canterbury lamb 8*d.* a pound, and a half-quartern loaf 2½*d.*, we feel that this must have been a very long time ago indeed. And yet in 1914 such was the case. Even in 1931, twelve or more years after the war had ended, the cost of living was more than 60 per cent. above the 1914 level.

When prices are high, the wage of the worker is naturally a matter of very much concern to all classes of the nation. During the war wages rose, but not as much as prices rose. After the war wages rose still more, until in 1920 the workers, as a whole, were just about as well off as they were in 1914. Of course it

was not the same in every trade. Munition workers and miners earned very high wages during the war, but after the war the engineers, miners, steel workers and others who worked for the export trade were not at all well off, because their employers had to "cut" wages to face foreign competition.

The second great change brought about by the war was the way in which the State stepped in to control industry. Very early in the war the Government realized that there could not be any *laissez faire* policy towards the firms who were making munitions and clothing for the armies. The Ministry of Munitions was formed, and all the firms making munitions were brought under Government control. The War Office organized the supply of clothing and food for the troops. The employers of "controlled establishments" were told how much and what kind of things to produce, what wages to pay, what prices to ask, and so on. The Government was, of course, their chief customer, and they were completely under its control. The railways and some of the ships were also taken over by the State.

When Mr. Lloyd George's Government was formed in 1916, State control was carried further still. All the coalfields were brought under the control of the Government, and nearly all British shipping. The wool and cotton industries were looked after by Boards of Control. A Food Controller and a Ministry of Food were created, and they organized a system of rationing whereby every person was allowed so much meat, sugar, and butter a week, and could purchase the amount they were allowed by giving "coupons" to the tradesmen who served them.



The Houses of Parliament and Westminster Hall.

(Photo: Photochrom Co.)

So it was that, towards the end of the war, the State was supreme in industry. The Government decided the price of nearly every necessary article of food. It looked after the railways, the mines, and the ships. It organized the growing of corn and the cutting down of trees for timber. Everything seemed to be controlled.

On the whole, considering that the task was so new and so vast and complicated, the Government did this work very well, though not, of course, in an "economic" way, for the country was in great straits and money was poured out like water. A good many business men were called in to help the civil servants, and the country came through these dark years without any great catastrophe to the people at home. Prices were kept fairly steady, considering the shortage; food supplies never actually failed even though there was a great scarcity of nourishing food; the children were well looked after, and never suffered the awful fate of thousands of children throughout the famine area on the Continent.

This success made the Socialists very pleased. They pointed out how well State control had worked, and how much better the businesses under State control were than those run by the people known as "war profiteers," who made huge profits out of goods that were urgently needed. "We are all Socialists now" could have been said with some truth between 1914 and 1918.

This experience of State control had two important results. Firstly, it made some people much less afraid of the State and much less nervous about Socialism. Secondly, it helped to promote what we

call "trusts" or "combines." We saw how the tendency was for businesses to get bigger and to join together in a few vast concerns. This tendency was very much hastened after the war. Employers were consulted by the Government, and met together on Boards and Committees, so that they had a great chance to form their own organizations and to join forces together. A kind of Trade-Unionism among employers began to flourish, and in 1916 was formed the biggest association of employers—the Federation of British Industries.

The third great change in industry caused by the war was the tremendous increase in the employment of women. Each year of the war saw more and more men taken for the fighting services, and consequently a greater shortage of able-bodied men in industry, and indeed in every occupation. Many of the vacant places were filled by women. They were employed in the engineering and munitions trades, as bus conductors, ticket collectors, tram drivers, agricultural labourers, and in hundreds of other ways. They flocked into Government offices, banks, and private firms, as typists and clerks, and often worked their way to very responsible positions. Every one was glad to employ capable women, and most of the women showed how well they could work when given a chance to do jobs that were worth while.

Although many of these women who were taking men's jobs gave them up at the end of the war, there was still a shortage of labour because of the loss of the men who had been killed and disabled, and many women stayed on in their employment. This was especially the case in offices, which found women so

useful and so cheap that they began to employ women and girls as typists and clerks almost entirely.

The war made it seem quite right for all girls to go out to work like their brothers, even if it was only work for which they were not paid wages. This change made a great difference to our social life. Before the war it was quite the usual thing for girls to live at home, if their parents could afford to keep them, helping their mother in the house and not thinking of earning their living. During the war nearly all these girls took up some form of work—in a factory or an office, in the “women’s auxiliary corps” attached to the forces, in a hospital, or in some other way. After the war many of them returned home, but many did not, and the result is that to-day there are thousands of girls and women earning money who might never have known or cared how to earn it if it had not been for the war.

So much for the three chief changes which the war brought. There were also some very grave difficulties which arose, and which have not yet been solved.

Many of England’s troubles have been due to the fact that her population has grown so quickly that she has not had time or energy to look after their well-being. That is why the slums grew up, and partly, at least, why the Industrial Revolution caused such distress. But immediately after the war we had to deal not with a growth of population but with a shrinkage. One million able-bodied men had been killed, and two million were wounded; some of these were permanently disabled, while others suffered intermittently from the effects of exposure, and shock, and overstrain. This shortage of men not only affected

industry and the trades and professions, which found it difficult to get suitable workers between the ages of eighteen and forty, but it also affected our social life.

A million men were killed, and there were far more women than men left. Thousands of these women lost husbands, or those whom they might have married, and this meant that a great many widows and single women were faced with the problem of what to do with their lives. Thousands of children were left fatherless, and this meant that their mother's task was a doubly hard one.

Another serious difficulty was the shortage of houses. All private building was stopped during the war, and although the shortage was bad enough in 1914 it was much worse in 1918. Thousands of returning soldiers, many of whom had married during the war, found themselves homeless, and with little chance of getting a house or rooms which they could afford. There were no houses to be had, and rents were very high, although the Government, by the Rent Restriction Act, had done something to keep down the rents of small houses. After the war building started, but it was many years before the shortage of houses began to show signs of being met.

A third set of difficulties were those connected with industry. During the war everything else had to give way to the country's main task of furnishing the troops with what they needed. With this end in view employers had given up their factories to the State ; the Trade-Unions had waived all the rules and regulations which had been laid down for the protection of the workers, and allowed women and unskilled men to do jobs which had formerly been done only by men who

had served an apprenticeship ; the workers gave up their right to strike, and knew that if they attempted to strike at such a time of national danger they would be regarded as traitors. For the time those who had a grievance put it aside.

It is little wonder that, at the end of the war, there was a great deal of confusion. Soldiers came back hoping to get their old jobs ; women and unskilled workers often wanted to stay on at the work to which they had become accustomed, or were kept on by their employers because they were cheaper ; workers started to agitate for strikes to gain one advantage or another. In the next chapter we shall read more about the labour unrest, and the gradual growth of unemployment which made the "post-war" years so distressing.

In the hearts of a very large number of thinking people the war created a new spirit of sympathy. Even while the fighting was going on they began to talk about the "reconstruction" that was to take place when the war was over—how industry was to be placed on a new basis of friendship and co-operation ; how class warfare was to be ended ; how evils like slums and overcrowding and unemployment were not to be tolerated any more. A Ministry of Reconstruction was set up, and made all kinds of plans for building a better England. This fact, by itself, shows what a great advance there had been in social consciousness and sense of civic responsibility since the time of the Napoleonic wars.

The effects of so terrible a conflict as the Great World War were so confusing, and the changes so fundamental, that no single Ministry could do very

much to face such a deep and complex problem. But even so, the year 1918, when the fighting ended, saw a strenuous effort made to improve matters. Three great reforms were carried through: the granting of the suffrage to women, further improvement of education, and readjustment of industrial relations.

The Representation of the People Act of 1918 not only gave the vote to practically all the men who had been left out of the earlier Reform Acts, but it gave votes to women over thirty years of age. This was a great tribute to the work which women had done during the war, when they showed that they were able to undertake the full duties of citizenship with at least as much competence as men.

The "Fisher" Education Act of 1918 made attendance at school compulsory for all children under fourteen, and abolished the "half-time" system in the textile trades; it made better provision for higher education of all kinds; and it proposed compulsory attendance at "continuation schools" up to the age of eighteen; but the time was not yet ripe for this particular reform.

The greatest of all after-war problems—how industry was to continue peacefully and efficiently—was faced by two proposals, which really only touched the fringe of the matter.

One of these was the setting up of what were called "Industrial Councils" or "Whitley Councils," so named after Mr. Whitley, the Speaker of the House of Commons. These were councils composed of equal numbers of employers and employed in certain well-organized industries. They were to consider matters affecting the progress and well-being of the industry,

and to make known its needs to the Government. There were also to be District Councils and Works



Right Hon. J. W. Whitley, late Speaker of the House of Commons.
(Photo: Topical Press Agency.)

Committees on the same lines for the districts and separate works. Unfortunately neither the employers nor the workers in the big industries, such as mining, engineering, and shipbuilding, liked this plan, and only



Aristide Briand, first French representative at the League of Nations.

(Photo: Topical Press Agency.)

a few Industrial Councils now remain in some of the smaller industries, such as match and glass manufacturing. The most important result was the setting up of Industrial Councils in the Civil Service and in the Municipal Service, on which civil servants and

local government employees can meet and discuss matters affecting their employment with the high officials who represent their employers.

In the badly organized trades an attempt was made to improve matters by an extension of the Trade Boards Act about which we have read.* The Trade Boards Act of 1918 applied a minimum wage to a wide range of new trades, and covered several million workers. This Act really did lead to a great improvement in the position of the lowest paid workers, most of whom were women.

At the end of the war (1918), the country was very tired, and a great many bottled-up grievances and irritations were set loose. Nearly all those who had risen so splendidly to the call of war were anxious to do their best to make a Britain "fit for heroes to live in." Never had there been a more whole-hearted desire for peace and goodwill. Very few of us reach our ideals, and the ideals themselves often get dim or tarnished. When we hear people talk of the hopelessness we made of things after the war, we feel there is much truth in it.

High ideals are not enough. The League of Nations was a great ideal; but it failed to maintain peace. The nations did not unite to provide it with arms when peace was threatened and broken. "Arms and the Covenant" (of the League) was Mr. Winston Churchill's slogan—but in those days his was a voice crying in the wilderness. War came again in 1939.

* See Chapter 16, page 253.

CHAPTER 20.—THE BRITAIN OF YESTERDAY (1918-30)

Depression after 1920—Trade after the war—Safeguarding and unemployment—The coal trade and the General Strike—Trade-Union Act of 1927—Growth of Socialism—Social reform since the war—Social changes

" Arise and conquer while ye can
The foe that in your midst resides,
And build within the mind of Man
The Empire that abides."

WILLIAM WATSON.

It is very difficult to write about the first quarter of the twentieth century, because it was cut in half by the greatest disturbance the world has ever known. There was no slow, orderly progress such as we see in the nineteenth century. The work of years for a better Britain had been shattered at a blow, and when the time came to start this work again conditions were much more difficult.

Although for a year or two after the Great War wages remained high and trade was very brisk, in 1920 a great depression began to set in. That depression gradually deepened, and the next twelve years were times of high prices, bad trade, and widespread unemployment.

You will remember reading about the lean and hungry years that followed the end of the war against

Napoleon. Food was dear and very scarce, while wages were miserably low ; there was much unemployment, especially when the soldiers came back from the war, and all the business of making clothes and munitions for the armies came to an end.

All these troubles came again in the years after 1918.

There were, however, two very important facts which made the Britain of 1918 very different from the Britain of 1815. One was the fact that both central and local governments were ready and anxious to do their best for those who had suffered through the war. There were pensions for the disabled men, and pensions for the widows of those who had been killed. There were training centres for helping ex-soldiers to learn some useful trade. There was a King's Roll on which were written the names of those employers who employed a certain number of disabled men. Although many mistakes were made, and many sufferers seemed to get left out, there was a keen desire to solve the insistent post-war problems.

The other fact which made the Britain of 1918 better to live in than the Britain of 1815 was the existence of those " social services " we have been reading so much about, and which, as we have seen, did not exist a century before.

Let us first look at the events of the years between 1920 and 1930 and see how Britain faced the difficulties and distress of peace time, first considering trade, then the Labour movement, and lastly social reform.

Trade had been a very severe sufferer from the war. All the Continental nations who were good customers for Britain's cotton, cloth, coal, iron, and machinery had become so poor that they could not afford to buy.

The workers of Germany, Belgium, and Japan, by paying lower wages and working longer hours, had begun to compete with us in nearly every industry, so that, as time went on, "Made in Germany" and "Made in Japan" became such familiar marks that we almost expected to see them on goods that were cheap and widely used.

Almost alone among the nations, Britain had tried to keep to her principle of Free Trade, and had allowed foreign goods to enter her ports free of duty, so that they were sold at lower prices than the British manufacturer could charge. During the war some industries, such as the making of motor-cars and gramophones, were protected or "safeguarded" by a duty on foreign imports.

In 1930 the number of unemployed rose to two millions. Some of these unemployed were men who had been displaced by new machinery and methods, just as men were superseded in the time of Ned Ludd. A certain number were what was known as "unemployable"—that is to say, they would never find suitable work under any conditions—but there remained at least a million men and women, boys and girls, who were able and willing to work, and the greatest problem of our time was how to revive trade so that more goods would be purchased and more workers employed. Some of the best minds in the country were, and still are, concentrated on this baffling problem. In the years around 1930 Britain (as well as the U.S.A. and Germany and other nations) was passing through the greatest depression in world trade ever known.

We saw that strikes were forbidden by law during the war, and that the Labour Party worked loyally with the Government. When the war ended it was only natural that a great many grievances should be made known, and a period of strikes began. One of the first campaigns was that for the "eight hour day," because during the war the hours worked in mines and factories had been very long. During 1919 the eight hour day was granted in nearly all the important industries.

There was one matter which was the key to many others in the years after the war, and that was the problem of the coal trade. The mining industry is one in which the miners and the mine-owners are both strongly organized, and the leaders of both sides have always been men of strong views. We saw how the coal trade grew to great prosperity and importance in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and how Britain grew rich, not only because she possessed so much coal for her factories, but also because she was able to export vast quantities of it to other lands.

After the war the miners began to organize a movement for the "nationalization of the mines"—that is to say, the ownership of the mines by the nation. They also demanded that the miners themselves should control the working of the mines. The employers said, however, that if trade was to prosper, the high wages paid during and immediately after the war must come down, and longer hours must be worked. To this the miners replied: "Not a penny off the pay, not a second on the day." In 1920, when the prosperous time came to an end, serious trouble was brewing.

There was also at this time a serious decline in the demand for British coal. Much less coal was being used at home, partly because so many factories and furnaces were either closed down or only working short time, and partly because electricity and oil were gradually driving out steam on the railways, in ships, and in private houses. The same changes were taking place abroad, and after 1923 the export of coal, which had been for so long one of Britain's most important industries, began to decrease rapidly. Now the coal trade had been the backbone of the country's industrial system, and the fact that it was declining in prosperity was a serious matter. During the twenties there were two disastrous strikes in the mining industry, the second of which happened in 1926, and is very important because it led to what was known as the "General Strike" of 1926—something which had never before happened in this country.

The miners, who were very angry with the report of a Commission which recommended some reduction in their wages, and did not recommend nationalization of the mines, had appealed for support to the Trade-Union Congress. The "General Council" of the Trade-Unions showed its sympathy with the miners by calling a General Strike; that is to say, they ordered the "first line" of the Labour forces—the railwaymen and transport workers, the iron and steel workers, the builders and printers—to stop work on the same day. This action meant that all the important industries were stopped, and the newspapers could not be published.

You will easily see how a General Strike of this kind could paralyse the life of the country. Few

trains, omnibuses, or lorries could be run, and no coal could be mined or transported, so that the factories and power stations could only go on working while their supply of coal lasted. The shops found it difficult to get fresh supplies, and the country might have quickly found itself near to starvation if the Government had not organized voluntary labour to drive omnibuses and lorries, arrange for the supply of milk and fresh food, and carry on the usual public services as far as possible.

The Government called on special constables and even troops to keep order; and as the voluntary workers managed to keep people fed, and arranged a certain amount of transport, the strikers were not in such a strong position as they had expected to be. A dispute arose between the miners and the other strikers, and after a week, when the country was already in a strange and confused state, the General Strike was called off. Only the miners remained on strike.

While it lasted the strike was extremely dangerous, for it struck at the very life of the nation, and it showed how strong and loyal to their Unions the workers were. But it also showed how impossible it is for one section of the people to stop the business of the whole country, because they themselves rely for their continued existence and the very success of their cause upon the public services which their action has brought to a standstill.

For six months after the collapse of the General Strike the miners kept up their fight, and a great many other Unions sent money to support them, until the Trade-Unions generally had very little money left,

and were greatly discouraged. When the miners at last went back to work there was great distress, still lower wages and longer hours, and fewer and fewer orders from abroad.

You may have read or heard of work being found for workers from "distressed areas." This term denotes particular localities where there is a great deal of unemployment, and especially the mining areas, where many pits had to be closed and thousands of workers were thrown out of work.

It is said by those who have made a special study of our coal industry that it can never hope to recover any part of its former prosperity unless it is very carefully reorganized, and makes use of all the newest methods of turning coal into power; for, after all, even that wonderful new agent, electricity, depends, in our country at least, chiefly upon the coal supplies. If we could make the coal trade prosperous again we should have gone a long way towards solving the problems of unemployment.

After the General Strike the Trade-Union movement was at a very low ebb. The strike had given people a fright, and many felt bitterly angry with the workers and their leaders. A Conservative Government was in power, and in 1927 it passed a new Trade-Union Act which caused a great setback to the Labour movement in comparison with their hardly-won Act of 1913.

Under the new Act a General Strike was declared to be illegal. A blow was also dealt at Trade-Union funds by enacting that no Union should collect money for any political purpose except from members who had signed a form saying that they wished to subscribe

for this purpose. This system was known as "contracting in," as opposed to "contracting out," which had been allowed under the 1913 Act, and made it much more difficult for the Unions to collect money for the Labour Party funds.

So far our review of the Labour movement in the twenties has been a gloomy one. Certainly trade was bad in that decade, unemployment worse than ever before, wages lower, and Trade-Unionism declining. But in spite of all this, or perhaps even because of it, the Labour movement itself grew in numbers and strength.

The Socialists had opened their ranks to what were called the "black-coated workers"—that is to say, they welcomed brain-workers as well as hand-workers as members. At every General Election their numbers had increased, and in 1924, although the Conservatives were still the strongest party, they were in a minority of eighty-nine against Liberal and Labour members combined. Relying upon Liberal support, the Labour Party took office, and Mr. Ramsay MacDonald became the first Labour Prime Minister of Great Britain. This Government did not last long, as it had not an independent majority in Parliament, and it was followed by another Conservative Government; but in 1929 the Labour or Socialist Party came into office with a majority over the Conservatives, but not with sufficient numbers to carry measures in opposition to Conservatives and Liberals combined.

This rise of the Socialist Party, from its very small beginnings in the early years of the century to its position as the governing party in the State, is one of

the most significant political facts of our own time. The Independent Labour Party, who are the more extreme members of the Labour Party, had adopted as their watchword the cry of "Socialism in our time." By this they meant that in the lifetime of the present generation it should be possible to create a Socialist State, with all national services and industries owned and controlled by the nation.

We noticed that during the war, instead of goading and suppressing and starving the workers, as in the days of the Napoleonic wars, the Government took great pains to consult and satisfy the Trade-Union leaders, and to ensure good wages and enough food to the workers. They realized that without the help and co-operation of the mass of the people the Government of the country could not go on. This change of attitude took place very gradually, and the growth of Socialist ideas has also been gradual. We can see how great is the change if we think how often we hear the words, "Why doesn't the Government do something about it?" Our old nineteenth-century friends who believed in *laissez faire* would never have asked such a question; but nowadays most people believe that it is the duty of the Government to help those who cannot help themselves. People differ very widely about how much help the Government ought to give, and how far a real helper ought to go without spoiling the individual characters of those whom he helps, but nobody would like to go back to the time when the Government turned its back on distress and refused to think about any remedy.

After the war taxation was naturally very heavy, and the struggle left the country heavily in debt, so

that there was not much wealth to pay for many reforms which are badly needed.

We saw,* however, that an Unemployment Insurance Act was passed in 1920 which applied compulsory insurance to nearly all grades of workers. This Act has been altered from time to time to try and make sure that "benefit," which is often wrongly called the "dole," should only be drawn by those who are "genuinely seeking work." A good citizen would not go on drawing money without doing his best to find work, for his education helps him to understand that in the long run he is paying the money to himself; but there is always a danger that unemployment benefit will fall into the hands of some who are too lazy and poor-spirited to try to find work.

Another most important reform has been the giving of pensions to widows of working men who had themselves been insured in a trade. There is, indeed, among all parties a strong desire to do the utmost for social reform that the country can afford, and we can thus see a change for the better since the beginning of the century, in spite of the terrible setback which the war gave to our national life. The working man of to-day may not always be able to buy more with his wages, because of higher prices, but he has usually a shorter day's work. If he is unemployed he receives insurance benefit from the State. His wife will not be left penniless if he dies. His children are educated in better schools, and have more chances of going on to higher schools and universities. He is often living in a better and more convenient house or

* See pages 174, 257.

flat. He may have an allotment or a small garden. He has far more choice of food and clothing, and more amusements. There is always a cinema within his reach, and he has often a wireless set.

A new "Survey of London Life and Labour" has just been begun, which continues the great work by Charles Booth.* The first volume, which is called *Forty Years of Change*, shows us very clearly how London, with its eight million people, nearly half of whom live in "Greater London," outside the county of London, is a far better place for the working man and his family to live in than it was at the beginning of the century.

It is much healthier, for the death-rate has fallen in thirty years from 20 to 13 per 1,000. Wages, even in spite of higher prices, often buy a third more than thirty years ago, especially those of unskilled workers. Rents, which have been restricted by law, are lower than before the war, when compared with earnings. The children, thanks to better housing, better education, and the many infant welfare centres which have been set up, are bigger, healthier, better clothed, and more intelligent.

The following are some illustrations of the social changes, or changes in people's way of living, that have taken place since the war.

If we consider country life, we see a great difference. Hundreds of the large country houses and big estates have been sold for building purposes, or the houses have been turned into hotels or institutions of some kind, or stand empty; partly because they cost so much to keep up, as it is difficult for the owners to get

* See pages 234, 249.

and pay the large staff of servants that is needed, and partly because wealthy people no longer live "on the land" like the squires of former times. Those who have grown up during this century and passed through the dangers and excitement of the war find country life rather quiet and dull, and they prefer to live in town and to spend their money there rather than to spend it in keeping up some large mansion which they do not really enjoy. Owing to this feeling the country-side is very fast changing its character.

Another way in which country life has altered is in the rapid growth of transport, and especially motor transport. Motor-buses and charabancs now link up villages which before the war were quite off the beaten track. The town and the country have been brought closer than ever before. London especially has grown bigger and bigger as "Greater London" has spread, and small houses and bungalows have been built all along the main roads out of London, and in hundreds of villages which can easily be reached by motor-coach.

This "invasion" of the country-side is in many ways a good thing, because it means that thousands of families, instead of living in overcrowded London areas, are living where the air is fresher, and where their children can play in the fields or their own gardens instead of in the streets. Many more people are able to get easily into the country for an outing or a holiday.

But the change has the disadvantage of spoiling in many ways the quiet beauty of the country-side—the peace of the villages and the quiet of the lanes. It is very difficult now to get away from the sight of an

ugly petrol pump, the honk of a motor horn or the machine-gun sound of a motor-cycle, the glaring red or yellow of a new bungalow. These offences against the community will continue until every one has been so well educated that he has learnt to do his work or take his pleasure without annoying other people ; or, if that state of things cannot be reached, until laws are made to enforce consideration for others by the threat of heavy penalties.

We saw in an earlier chapter how great a change there has been since the eighteenth century in transport, or the ways of getting about. There are literally millions more motor-cars on the roads than there were in 1913, and they are so much cheaper that it seems likely there will gradually be more and more. Horses and "push" bicycles are being driven off the roads except in the country. Motor-coaches, lorries, and motor-cycles, as well as private motor-cars—all these crowd the roads, and have certainly made a revolution in transport since the war, which has, however, created the most serious problem of modern social life. The number of street accidents in England and Wales caused by vehicles increased from 40,000 in 1913 to 117,000 in 1927, so that in a very real sense a kind of war goes on continually on the roads throughout the country.

Two different inventions have greatly changed the conditions of life for the working and middle classes—the cinema and the wireless. The growth of the popularity of the cinema since the war is extraordinary ; and although the cinema is not always very good or helpful, it has done a great deal to enlarge the minds of people who never before realized the habits, good

or bad, of other countries and of other classes in their own country. Even more than the cinema, the wireless has, in the last few years, brought the whole world—its literature, politics, and music—to the home of the working man.

There has also been a revolution almost as important in the home. Electric light, electric and gas fires, vacuum cleaners, and hundreds of labour-saving devices have made the housewife's work much easier. She can keep her home clean and comfortable far more easily than her grandmother could, and she has thus more leisure for outdoor exercise and amusement.

CHAPTER 21.—BRITAIN AND THE SECOND WORLD WAR (1939-45)

DURING the twenty years (1919-39) between two world wars the statesmen of Britain and the world failed to maintain those two essentials for a better world—peace and plenty. The terrible world depression (1929-33) in trade and industry not only brought poverty and suffering to many, but it was also one of the causes of the great war that began in 1939, and it was during that trade crisis that Hitler in Germany and Mussolini in Italy rose to power as dictators. Trade means work for men to do, and work means food for mankind, and without work and food there is sure to be trouble.

Every effort was made by our statesmen to maintain peace, but both dictators kept Europe in a ferment by their policy of aggression. Hitler's annexation of Czechoslovakia and invasion of Poland precipitated a crisis which led to the outbreak of war in September 1939. By June 1940 Hitler had overrun Denmark, Norway, Holland, and Belgium, and French resistance had collapsed. Italy had by this time joined Germany, and Britain and the British Commonwealth stood alone. This year was the most critical and heroic in the long story of our country, and it was then that the R.A.F., by its victorious defence of Britain against the air power of Germany, earned the unforgettable

tribute by the Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, "Never in the field of human conflict has so much been owed by so many to so few."

In 1941 Hitler invaded Russia and later in the same year Japan attacked the United States navy at Pearl Harbour in Hawaii, in each case without any formal declaration of war. Now the great Allied Nations—Britain, U.S.A., Russia, and China—blocked the attempt of Germany, Italy, and Japan to dominate the world.

In our own country every man and woman, boy and girl played their part. Everyone was registered either for military service or for essential employment. Food and clothing were rationed, seven million acres of grassland were ploughed up to grow more food, and when Germany tried to devastate the centres of population by air attack children were evacuated in large numbers to safer areas. Out of 13,000,000 houses 4,500,000 were damaged by this enemy action. This air attack on the centres of population was only one example of the ruthless methods adopted to cow the world into submission. Submarine attacks on shipping, the wholesale plunder of occupied countries, the uprooting of millions of citizens from their homes to act as slave labour in Germany, the extermination of millions of others—these were some of the effects produced by the evil genius of Hitler on a nation only too ready to fall a prey to his perverted ideals.

In the end, but only at a tremendous cost, these formidable foes were overcome. Italy collapsed in 1944, Germany followed in 1945, and in the same year the war against Japan, which might have lasted for many months longer, was brought to a sudden close

by the discovery and use of the atomic bomb, whose powers of destruction were immensely greater than any that mankind had ever known.

But this greatest chapter in history is too recent to recount in detail. It is however remarkable that Britain, in spite of a titanic war, continued on its path of a better life for all. Planning for peace was not forgotten. Social services of various kinds were being organized, and the famous "Beveridge Scheme" was the basis of the National Insurance Act of 1944, and additional schemes are being planned.

The old problems of peace and plenty are still problems for to-day with which nowadays the whole world is concerned. The advent of flying and wireless have made the whole world one as never before in the story of mankind. The setting up of a United Nations Organization (UNO) to ensure peace, justice, and prosperity throughout the world gives promise of happier things, but only if the individual citizen is aware of the problems to be solved and determines to do his share to further every good cause. Never were our duties of citizenship more important in our daily life.

EXERCISES

1. (a) What sight do you think would astonish you most in—
 - (i) The London of 1750?
 - (ii) A village of 1750?
- (b) Describe a journey from London to Yorkshire in the eighteenth century.
- (c) Could you describe the eighteenth century as "the good old days," and if so, for what reasons?
2. (a) Why was wool the most important article of British commerce in the eighteenth century?
- (b) Describe a day in the life of any eighteenth-century craftsman.
- (c) Would you like to have been an eighteenth-century apprentice? What are the chief differences between apprentice life then and to-day?
- (d) How might two merchants in the middle of the eighteenth century have discussed "the future of British trade"?
3. (a) What did an eighteenth-century village look like?
- (b) Why was the open field system so wasteful?
- (c) Describe a typical farmer at the beginning and end of the eighteenth century.
- (d) What do we owe to any one of the great eighteenth-century farmers?
- (e) How might a cottager whose land had been enclosed have described the plight of himself and his family?
- (f) Do you think Cobbett would be pleased or distressed if he were to tour the English country-side on horseback to-day?
4. (a) Give some examples of inventions which "come when they are wanted."
- (b) What interests you most about—
 - (i) James Watt?
 - (ii) George Stephenson?
- (c) How did steam-power change the appearance of England?

- (d) Describe the rise of the coal industry. Why is it so important in our history?
 - (e) How might an old man in 1840 have described the Industrial Revolution to his grandson?
 - (f) Do you think "the steam-engine was invented too soon"?
5. (a) Distinguish between merchants and manufacturers. Illustrate this distinction from the woollen trade in the eighteenth century.
- (b) Describe any eighteenth-century merchant you have read about in fiction.
 - (c) What is a capitalist, and how did he come to be necessary to industry?
 - (d) Describe the career of a factory owner of the late eighteenth century.
 - (e) Give some examples of the importance of capital at the time of the Industrial Revolution.
6. (a) If you had been Prime Minister between 1815 and 1850, how would you have tried to avoid some of the mistakes that were made?
- (b) Describe the scene in any English town or village when the disbanded soldiers returned after Waterloo.
 - (c) Compare the Luddite riots with any other riots you know of which were due to the people's hatred of something new.
 - (d) Why was 1819 the low-water mark of our history?
 - (e) What were the good and bad points in the policy of *laissez faire*?
 - (f) Why was trade so difficult to carry on in the early nineteenth century?
7. (a) Which of the three reformers—Cobbett, Place, and Owen—would you most like to have met, and why?
- (b) Which of the three do you think has the most permanent place in our history?
 - (c) Why was the First Reform Act such a disappointment?
 - (d) What was the People's Charter? If you were to draw up a charter at the present day, what six points would you insist on?
 - (e) Do you think "the greatest happiness of the greatest number" is a good test for laws?
8. (a) What was village life like in the early nineteenth century?

Give illustrations, if you can, from the works of Jane Austen.

- (b) Describe the trial and sentence of a man for poaching in 1830.
- (c) What caused the labourers' revolt of 1830? Had it anything in common with the peasants' revolt of 1381?
- (d) What do you mean by the "hungry forties"?
- (e) When did England first become a Free Trade country?
- 9. (a) Describe a child's day in a factory or mine of the early nineteenth century.
- (b) What were some of the reasons why so many children were employed in industry?
- (c) Why did so many employers fight against the Factory Acts?
- (d) What were the drawbacks to the factory system, and what were its benefits? Which do you think the more important?
- (e) Describe a factory or mining town in 1830. What improvements would you notice in the same town in 1930?
- 10. (a) What difficulties were in the way of the early Trade-Unions?
- (b) Which do you think the most important and successful movement—the Trade-Union, Friendly Society, or Co-operative movement?
- (c) Describe the working of a co-operative store.
- (d) Show why this chapter is called "Working together."
- (e) What groups of working men were formed in the middle years of the nineteenth century?
- (f) How was the workman of 1850 better off than his fellow of 1800?
- 11. (a) How far is it true to say that the nineteenth century was much kinder than the eighteenth?
- (b) Why is Lord Shaftesbury known as the "Wilberforce of the whites"?
- (c) Write an imaginary conversation between Wilberforce and Lord Shaftesbury on the "slave trade."
- (d) What were the chief ideas of the Christian Socialists?
- (e) Give an account of any novel or poem of the early nineteenth century which describes the miseries of the poor.
- (f) Give some examples of charitable societies you know of which did not exist in the eighteenth century.

12. (a) What kind of place do you think a workhouse ought to be ?
(b) How has the "sturdy beggar" been treated since the time of Queen Elizabeth ?
(c) Who pays the "poor rate," and how is it spent ?
(d) Describe either a workhouse or a prison pictured by Dickens.
(e) In what ways have we improved upon the old Poor Law in this century ?
(f) Imagine a day in the life of John Howard.
13. (a) Describe a journey from London to Brighton in 1750 and in 1830.
(b) Why were canals so badly needed in 1760, and why have they now declined ?
(c) What new jobs came about as the result of the coming of the canals and railways ?
(d) Describe the feelings of a man who travelled on the first steam train.
(e) What changes took place in shipping during the nineteenth century ?
(f) How did the railways help (i) industrial England, and (ii) social life ?
14. (a) Why was the Second Reform Act called a "leap in the dark" ?
(b) Give some reasons why our foreign trade increased so rapidly after the Napoleonic wars.
(c) How might a family dinner in 1900 have differed from one in 1800 ? What brought about the difference ?
(d) What is the chief characteristic of the British Commonwealth of nations ?
(e) In what ways did new industries and manufactures improve the comforts of the home in this period ?
(f) Describe some of the changes in a draper's shop between 1850 and 1900.
(g) Would you like to have lived in Britain at the end of the nineteenth century ? What do you think were the attractions and disadvantages of that age ?
15. (a) Say something about Socialism as taught by (i) Marx, (ii) George, and (iii) Ruskin.
(b) Which of these three men do you think had the greatest influence on our history, and why ?

- (c) Give some reasons for the rapid growth of the Labour Party after 1900.
 - (d) What was the difference between the "old" and "new" Trade-Unions? Give examples of each kind of Union existing to-day.
 - (e) Imagine a meeting of employers and Trade-Union leaders in any trade taking place just before the war. Describe the meeting, and write a short speech for the leader on either side.
16. (a) Describe the conditions under which the following might have lived in 1900—
- (i) A woman making shirts in her own home.
 - (ii) A casual labourer at the docks.
- (b) Give some examples of the way in which people at the end of the nineteenth century took a new interest in social conditions.
- (c) Why did social legislation mean the decline of *laissez faire*? What was the important policy in which Britain kept to *laissez faire* principles?
- (d) Describe the feelings of an employer of 1810 who found himself and his factory transported to the year 1910. What rules would he have to observe?
- (e) When were Labour Exchanges first introduced, and what is their purpose?
- (f) How does the State help the worker—
- (i) When he is ill?
 - (ii) When he is injured while at work?
 - (iii) When he is underpaid?
 - (iv) When he is out of work?
17. (a) Give some examples of the work done by your own local council.
- (b) If you were a member of your local council which part of their work would interest you most, and why?
- (c) What was the value and importance of the Municipal Corporations Act of 1835?
- (d) What services does the ratepayer get in return for his money?
- (e) Give examples of the way in which duties were handed over during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries by Parliament to the local councils.

- (f) What do you know about the Local Government Act of 1929?
18. (a) Describe the school life of a boy or a girl living in 1800.
(b) How did the idea of girls' education change during the nineteenth century?
(c) Give some account of the work of Bell and Lancaster.
(d) What influence did the ideas of Dr. Arnold of Rugby have on the schools of his day and our own day?
(e) What is meant by State education? Was it set up by the Education Act of 1870?
(f) What changes were made by the Education Act of 1902?
(g) What improvements do you think are still needed in our system of education?
19. (a) What were the grievances of (i) women, (ii) the workers in industry in the Britain of 1914?
(b) What changes did the war bring about in industry?
(c) What new work did women undertake during the war? Mention cases where women are still employed on such work.
(d) In what ways did the State interfere in industry during the war? How did this differ from the attitude of the Government during the Napoleonic wars?
(e) What do we mean by the "cost of living," and why has it become so important since the war?
(f) What were the most urgent problems facing the worker in 1918? Which of these were met by laws passed in that year?
20. (a) Why has the "coal question" been so important since 1918? Say what you know about the mining industry at the present time.
(b) Describe a scene during the General Strike of 1926.
(c) Compare the social life of a working-class family of the present day with that of one living in 1900.
(d) What twentieth-century invention do you think has had the greatest influence on our history?
21. Tell how the Second World War affected your own village or town, you yourself, your family and friends.

SOME BOOKS FOR GENERAL READING

ILLUSTRATING THE SOCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL HISTORY OF THE MODERN PERIOD

PART I

Chapter 1	<i>The Deserted Village</i>	O. Goldsmith.
	<i>The Heart of Midlothian</i>	Sir W. Scott.
Chapter 2	<i>Silas Marner</i>	G. Eliot.
	<i>Barnaby Rudge</i>	C. Dickens.

PART II

Chapter 3	<i>Rural Rides</i>	W. Cobbett.
Chaps. 4 and 5	<i>Hard Times</i>	C. Dickens.
	<i>Shirley</i>	C. Brontë.
	<i>Mary Barton</i>	Mrs. Gaskell.
	<i>Hard Cash</i>	C. Reade.
	<i>Put Yourself in his Place</i>	"

PART III

Chaps. 6 and 7	<i>Felix Holt</i>	G. Eliot.
Chapter 8	<i>A Shepherd's Life</i>	W. H. Hudson.
Chapter 11	<i>The Water Babies</i>	C. Kingsley.
	<i>Alton Locke</i>	"
	<i>Yeast</i>	"
Chapter 12	<i>Oliver Twist</i>	C. Dickens.
	<i>Little Dorrit</i>	"
	<i>Bleak House</i>	"
Chapter 13	<i>Milestones</i>	E. Knoblock.
	<i>The Ship</i>	St. John Ervine.
Chapter 15	<i>Unto this Last</i>	J. Ruskin.
Chapter 17	<i>Sketches by Boz</i>	C. Dickens.
Chapter 19	<i>Tom Brown's Schooldays</i>	T. Hughes.

	Character of Government.		Social Legislation.	Associations of Workers.
1800-25.	Unreformed House of Commons.	Laissez Faire Policy. "Squirearchy."	1802. Health and Morals of Apprentices Act. 1819. Cotton Mills Act.	1799 and 1800. Combination Acts. 1819. Six Acts.
1825-50.	1832. First Reform Act. Enfranchisement of the middle class.		1833. Factory Act, or "Children's Charter." 1842. Mines Act. 1847. "Ten Hours Act." 1848. Public Health Act.	1825. Repeal of Combination Acts. 1844. Rochdale pioneers.
1850-75.	1867. Second Reform Act. Enfranchisement of the artisans.		1856. Fencing of machinery. 1867. Factory Act.	
1875-1900.	1884. Third Reform Act. Enfranchisement of agricultural labourers.	Growth of State Control.	1875. Public Health Act. 1880 and 1897. Employers' Liability Acts. 1867-1901. Extension of factory legislation.	1871. Trade-Union Act. 1875. Friendly Societies Act. 1881. Social Democratic Federation. 1889. Fabian Society. "New Unionism." 1893. Independent Labour Party.
1900-30.	1918. Franchise Act. Enfranchisement of women over thirty. 1927. Franchise Act. Adult franchise.		1908. Old Age Pensions. 1909. Labour Exchanges. 1909. Trade Boards Act. 1909. Town Planning Act. 1911. Health Insurance. 1918. Trade Boards Act. 1919. Town Planning Act. 1920. Unemployment Insurance. 1925. Widows' Pensions Act.	1900. Labour Party. 1901. Taff Vale judgment. 1906. Trade Disputes Act. 1909. Osborne judgment. 1913. Trade-Union Act. 1914. Triple Alliance. 1927. Trade-Union Act. 1945. Wages Council Act.

CHART

Relief of the Poor.	Education	Local Government.	Trade Policy.
1795-1834. "Speenhamland" system of relief in aid of wages.	1810-30. Work of Lancaster and Bell. 1820-40. Reform of public schools by Butler, Arnold, etc.	Unreformed Boroughs.	Protection with elaborate tariff. 1815. Corn Law.
1834. Poor Law Amendment Act.	1833. First Government grant to schools.	1835. Municipal Reform Act.	1822-45. Reduction of duties by Huskisson and Peel. 1846. Repeal of Corn Laws.
	1870. Education Act. 1870-1930. Seven new universities founded.		1853 and 1860, etc. Gladstone's Budgets establishing Free Trade.
	1880. Compulsory elementary education. 1880- . Growth of girls' public schools. 1891. Free elementary education. 1899. Board of Education.	1888. County Councils Act. 1894. District Councils Act.	Proposals for Protection and Tariff Reform unsuccessful.
1908. Old Age Pensions Act.	1902. Education Act.	Growth of "Municipal Socialism."	Growth of Imperial Preference.
1920. Unemployment Act.	1918. Education Act.		1921-30. "Safeguarding" policy in case of certain industries.
1929. Local Government Act. Public Assistance Committees.	1944. Education Act.	1929. Local Government Act. 1944. Local Government Act.	

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